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**Buddhas & Bratwurst:
Ethical Identity in Global Contexts**

A Dissertation Presented
to
*The Faculty of The School of Education
Organization & Leadership Program
Pacific Leadership International*

*In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education*

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Oakland, California
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CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Introduction

In the heart of Southeast Asia, Bangkok, Thailand stands as a beacon to the West of economic opportunity and political stability. It is a dynamic culture, where thousand-year-old Buddhas stand in the shadows of glass high-rise towers. German corporations have crafted unique business relationships in Thailand in order to utilize its competitive geographic location, inviting investment policies and affordable labor costs. This unique cultural relationship, dating back to the 1860's, illustrates a variety of interpretations about how ethical identities are negotiated in global contexts.

German professionals doing business in Thailand have significantly altered many aspects of Thailand's economic, environmental and cultural life, and may have disrupted the Thai social structure and assumptions of public life for the foreseeable future (Mulder 1996: 198). Thais have also played a significant role in Germany's task to remain a competitive European economy. Studying the practice of ethical decision-making in global corporations in Thailand is of considerable importance, because international organizations are the fastest growing type of organization, and the markets of Southeast Asian nations are becoming more important to Western economies. Stage (1999: 2) says that it is no understatement that Southeast Asian markets, including Thailand, are fast becoming one of the most robust markets in the world because of its economic accessibility, affordable labor, consumer-oriented society and stable legal system. Today, more than 30 German corporations and thousands of Germans do business in Thailand in the areas of manufacturing, production, education, trade and

tourism, and are Thailand's most ambitious trading partner (German-Thai Chamber of Commerce 2004).

This research addresses the question of how Thais and Germans co-create ethical decisions in German organizations based in Thailand. The researcher has participated in over fifteen selected conversations with Thai and German managers, consultants and small business owners who have significant experience with one another in social contexts. This exploration is important because broadening our understanding of how one's identity and perspective of ethical decisions is negotiated in a multicultural and multilingual business context is critical to understanding the role Thais and Germans play in one another's social, regional and global development, and can inform us in making more culturally appropriate interpretations of one another's actions.

The researcher seeks to answer the following three fundamental questions based on conversations with selected Thai and German participants.

- 1) How does belonging to Thai or German culture influence a person's co-creation of an ethical decision in a business context?
- 2) How do Thais and Germans negotiate ethical identities across linguistic, spatial and cultural boundaries in an increasingly interconnected global world?
- 3) How does the relationship between communication, culture and ethics influence the daily work practices of Thais and Germans?

The subject of ethical decision-making in global business contexts operating in Thailand is important because Thailand represents a stable and progressive developing economy and culture that has a long history with European corporations, especially German companies, which have been a major European trading partner since the late

1860's. However, little research has been done to explore just what type of relationships have been developed, and fewer have explored how Thais and Germans make ethical decisions in each other's company. Knowing more about how Germans and Thais conduct business in everyday situations is valuable information for business leaders, managers and academics interested in managing inter-cultural communication or for those interested in establishing trade relations.

Chapter One of this document outlines the lack of research or evidence in the subject area, the background of the research question, and why both educators and practitioners may find the information useful. Chapter Two provides a background of both Germany and Thailand focusing on social structure, education, parenting and religion. Chapter Three provides a review of literature pertaining to the subject, including the history and challenges of operating a global corporation in Thailand, and the literature explaining the relationship between communication, culture and ethics. Chapter Four summarizes the conceptual framework of this study, based on Critical Hermeneutics, where participants co-create the meaning of their own and one another's ethical identities. Chapter Five summarizes the study's research protocol and the results of a pilot study. Chapter Six presents the data collected during the research visit in the summer of 2004. Chapter Seven analyzes the data in light of the research orientation. And Chapter Eight proposes recommendations international managers, trading partners and educators can take to establish more meaningful relationships between Thais and Germans, as well as what implications the study holds for those interested in the study of ethical decision-making across cultures.

Statement of the Problem: Transnational Corporations Operating in Southeast Asia

While there has been a reasonable amount of interest in the study of ethical decision-making in organizations, few study the ethics of global organizations, and fewer explore the implications of how ethical decisions are made in Thailand that integrate the Thai point of view and the intersection of communication and culture (Stage 1999: 3). Stage (1999: 3) explains, “Missing from studies of multinational organizations is an examination of participation, specifically a discussion about who gets to participate in the creation of organizational communication in multinational organizations. An extensive literature review by Singhapakdi et al. (2000: 2) states that studies concerning ethical decision-making have been primarily formulated in the social context of the United States and there are questions about their applicability to other cultures.

Research based on the Critical Hermeneutic approach to ethical decision-making perspective is the next stage in the development of understanding ethics, as participants in global contexts co-create ethical decisions based on the interplay of one another’s communicative norms and cultural assumptions. Stage (1999: 3) goes on to note that no current studies describe or explain cross-cultural comparisons of communication patterns between cultures where people interact over any period of time. Jackson and Artola (1997:1) state that there has been little academic work on the cross-cultural study of ethical values and behavior. In addition, the predominant method of investigation into cross-cultural communication and ethical decision-making is either centered on one culture, is measured scientifically, or neglects the active role of participants in the creation of their own social reality. Therefore, this research presents an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge in this area.

Background of the Problem: The Rise of European Transnationals

Germany and Thailand have been doing business since the signing of the Thai-German Treaty of Amity in 1862. According to the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce Website (2005), Germany is now Thailand's largest trading partner and foreign investor among European countries and has established numerous divisions in the major cities of Thailand in the fields of manufacturing, banking, machines, tools and tourism. If German businesses seek to continue to develop long-lasting economic, social and political relationships with the Thai people, while honoring and respecting Thai culture, history and traditions, they are confronted with ethical decisions on a daily basis, such as where to do business in Thailand, whom to do business with, and how their decisions influence Thai culture. An assumption of this study is that international managers consider the ethical implications of their actions in their decision-making, and that they must confront cultural perspectives in their reasoning and communication. The purpose of this research is to engage a selected group of Thai and German people in conversation to better understand how their unique cultural, historical and communicative experiences influence their ethical actions to inspire a dialogue about ethics between Western and European managers doing business with the Thais.

While there are major economic advantages to establishing a subsidiary in Southeast Asia, there are also problems that can arise in distant markets outside of Europe that can result from misunderstandings about the local culture. Jansson (1998: 3) explains that Southeast Asian markets have a strong local character that differs widely from European culture. One of the many questions that operating a subsidiary in Thailand raises is, which cultural values will dominate? Is promoting European values possible in

the host nation? Or should there be a combination of at least two cultural value systems?

The cultural and social values of the Thai people are very different from Germans, and this distance can create uncertainty and confusion in daily practices. A global corporation is a unique social context that contains social values and institutional assumptions that are often at odds with the participants' own social experiences (Cooper 1992: 1).

The main reasons European organizations would want to do business in Southeast Asia is because of the region's rapid economic development, its emerging profitable markets and its economically liberal developmental policies (Jansson 1994: 15).

Southeast Asian nations, such as Thailand, are rich in natural resources. There is growing demand for products there because of increasing affluent populations, in addition to an affordable and efficient, often non-organized labor force. Europeans also see Thailand as offering strategic competitive positioning in relation to China and Japan, who have invested in the region for decades. There is growing fear among European and North American companies that Southeast Asia may become a more unified economic region and a pre-eminent economic power in the world, and therefore want to establish a regional presence before it's too late (Jansson 1984: 18).

Factors influencing the rise of global organizations in Thailand are the reduction of transportation costs, global communications networks, more sophisticated workers, and more liberal economic policies (Krasner 1995: 30). The integration of the European Community into a single market in 1992 promotes uniform economic policies and market-based solutions to trade expansion. This forced the hand of the United States, Mexico and Canada to sign the North American Free Trade Agreement. And while countries in Southeast Asia have tried to follow suit, according to Krasner (1995: 48)

economic alliances are not as strong in the Pacific Rim as in the west, and a more haphazard regional economic climate exists which has allowed other stronger economic powers such as Germany and China to emerge.

In addition to its regional positioning, Thailand offers political and economic policies that combine economic freedom with political autocracy, which benefits European organizations and makes it easier for them to establish subsidiaries.

The World Bank threw its weight behind the export lobby in the advice it gave the government as the economy moved into a downturn in the mid-1980's, emphasizing the need to open up the economy, privatize state enterprises, and perhaps surprisingly, given the debate on foreign debt, reaffirmed the importance of international capital flows in development (Bello 1998: 12).

Thai and international businesses emerged as powerful lobbyists in Thai government and became active in parliamentary politics, and in the early 1990's, business became the dominant actor in social and economic policy (Bello et al. 1998: 12). The result of this was the growing effort by businesses to seek commercial advantage through political patronage. The mixture of economics and politics has created tensions in society, which some fear could risk the continued rapid growth of the region (Jansson 1998: 19).

European businesses have undoubtedly benefited from Thailand's friendly open-market climate. Coupled with an autocratic political system based on a constitutional monarchy, which has a strong tradition of suppressing conflict and promoting the status quo, conditions in Thai society are ripe for economic investment.

Jansson (1998: 31) explains that transnational corporations based in Western Europe share particular traits that distinguish them from companies indigenous to

Southeast Asia. Jansson (1998: 31) states that the study of authority structure within European transnationals often brings out the following points:

1. They are less personal, more formal and individualistic.
2. There is a clear separation between organizational and family authority.
3. There is less personal trust and more reliance on institutionally-based trust.
4. There is greater emphasis on formal procedures and control.
5. Formal contracts are more important.
6. There is greater formal specification of individual roles, jobs and occupations.

Furthermore, Jansson (1998: 9) states that Western European Corporations tend to value order, symmetry, linearity, individuality and an epistemological framework that is organized hierarchically and based on the efficient allocation of resources, emphasizing decentralization and unit measurement. In contrast, Thai corporations tend to be concerned with synergetic relationships and long-term effects rather than short-term individual results, and aim at a totality of success rather than success in unit measurements. The differences between institutional environments and the participants' social norms, and how they influence the ways Germans and Thais co-create meaning in global contexts is the basis of this exploration.

Other differences may exist between German and Thai workers such as the geographic location of the company itself and its relationship to the natural world, as well as the place of the individual in relationship to the organization (Carroll & Gannon 1997: 9). The national cultures are vastly different, and basic values regarding truth-telling, falsification of documents and the treatment of those not of the in-group offer ethical challenges in daily life. Education is also a primary influence on values and behaviors. In

Germany, children endure a competitive and divisive primary school arrangement that places children in specific areas according to the judgments of teachers, and testing children is seen as influencing one's future success (Carroll & Gannon 1997: 11). German children are competitive, but also tend to value the overall goals of the group.

On the contrary, the Thai educational system promotes underlying social values of traditional Thai life including discipline, national allegiance, social order and the subjugation of the individual for the group (Mulder 1997: 32). Religion also plays a vital role in the cultural differences between Germans and Thais, as Germans are primarily Christian and more private about their faith, while Thais are mostly Buddhist and practice it openly in a ritualistic fashion to present the appropriate public face, but is not always genuine.

In summary, this section describes what the research states about some of the general benefits and obstacles operating organizations in Thailand as well as some introductory thoughts about social differences between Thais and Germans that may influence daily life. The next chapter discusses more specifically the development of the Thai economy in luring transnationals and why the perspective of Critical Hermeneutics offers a unique view-point from which to explore ethical decision-making.

Significance of the Research Subject

Understanding ethics from the perspective of Critical Hermeneutics allows participants in global contexts to describe in their own words their experiences with a foreign culture, which illustrates a particular social milieu in the form of a narrative rather than a set of abstract principles and data, which tends to be the prevailing form of evidence on this subject. Herda (1999: 28) says that within "This philosophical

framework, transnational and trans-cultural understanding is possible in community, not merely in an exchange of information or in cultural sensitivity-training sessions.” Critical Hermeneutics and an ethnographic approach to research allows managers and educators to read for themselves the testimonies, stories and experiences of Thai and German workers, which provides in-depth, first-hand experiences that are often underutilized in prevailing research orientations.

The predominant method of investigation into cross-cultural communication and ethical decision-making is either one-way, scientific, or neglects the active role of participants in the creation of their own social reality. Turner (1987: 101) argues that humans learn by experience and that our experiences are communicated in the symbolic acts and forms of our varying cultures. Hermeneutics attempts to draw meaning from the intersection of culture through the symbolic form of language. Critical Hermeneutics offers a point of view that focuses on the co-creation of meaning in the act of language in normal day-to-day interactions that allows members of both cultures to participate in the formation of ethical decisions. Research based on the Critical Hermeneutic approach to ethical decision-making where participants co-create the meaning of ethics from a cultural perspective, could be beneficial to educators, researchers and business practitioners.

Summary

Chapter One provides a general overview of the research subject, in addition to a statement of the problem, brief background of the problem, its significance for researchers, and implications for researchers and practitioners. Chapter Two explains the

underlying cultural influences on Thai and German ethical decision-making including:
socialization and education, parenting and religion.

CHAPTER TWO

COUNTRY BACKGROUNDS: GERMANY AND THAILAND

Underlying Social Influences on Thai and German Ethical Decision-Making

Introduction

It is nearly impossible to clarify precisely what underlying cultural influences serve as the foundation for German and Thai ethical decision-making. Geertz (1973: 34) says that anthropologists have sought for decades to provide an intelligible account of just what man is, only to become entangled in a torturous web with no end in sight. However, we can narrow down some cultural factors. Singhapakdi et al. (2000: 5) state that any study of ethics should include a variety of factors including personal characteristics and also the social and cultural environment.

Carroll and Gannon (1997: 58) identify parenting, socialization and education as the three primary influences on cultural values and beliefs which constitute one's ethical perspective. The literature also points to religion as a significant influence on ethical decision-making and should be included in an exploration of ethics (Puntarigivat 1998: 347). Since the ways Thais and Germans participate in global contexts is the focus of this exploration, ways of working is included. There are sharp differences, but also some similarities between Thai and German culture in these areas, which may provide clues as to how Germans and Thais might make ethical decisions, and are explored as part of the conversation topics to illuminate the underlying beliefs of each respective culture.

Theme One: Socialization & Education

Thai Socialization and Education

When pursuing an understanding of Thai culture from an academic perspective, it is important to note that the majority of literature regarding Thai social life originates from European or North American anthropologists living in Thailand over a significant period of time. Some native Thai writers have emerged, and the Thai perspective is continuing to develop, especially as it is translated in English language form, but they are still few. The study strongly attempts to include the Thai point of view in the form of Thai authors where it can be found, and where it is relevant to the topic at hand.

Thai society places high value on smooth interaction and the avoidance of conflict, where everyone knows his place and polite behavior is encouraged (Mulder 2000: 46). Interaction demands smiles and polite speech, and when people fail to reciprocate kindness, Thais tend to feel insecure and troubled. Mulder (2000: 49) states that because of intense cultural pressures toward social conformity and the presentation of self in everyday life, The World Health Organization has determined that Thais suffer from unusually high levels of neurosis because of the effects of outside social and cultural influences and the resultant internal conflict brought on by foreign cultural values.

Thai society also values social hierarchy, and the art of role-playing is highly developed, as gestures reflect hierarchical expectations (Mulder 2000: 47). Thais are concerned with social rank, such as one's profession or level of education, which determines language use and social presentation, and are concerned less with individual

personality as with status. Status is a form of social obligation, and Thais are acutely aware of each other's hierarchical position and treat one another accordingly. Thai society projects an image of acceptance, but this also masks deeper social and psychological unpleasantness, especially when dealing with members of the out-group.

Thais tend to value members of the in-group because they are socialized with the belief that members of one's own intimate social network are more trustworthy and reliable. Thais perceive outsiders as potentially harmful and maintain social distance in return for social fluidity and predictability (Mulder 2000: 50). In return, the suppression of personal involvement breeds some levels of social alienation, which may explain the high levels of mental health problems and hidden anti-social behaviors, such as drug-use and prostitution (Mulder 200: 50). Because of a strict respect for social hierarchy, members of the lower social classes are often treated poorly and feel oppressed. On the other hand, members of the higher social class may be respected but alienated, because their social interaction may not be perceived as genuine. This dynamic is important when considering the professional relationships between Germans and Thais, which may produce uncomfortable, but more importantly, misleading social interactions.

Thais generally avoid confrontation, show friendliness in the face of opposition, and often submit to those who are in power to maintain social harmony and sustain social hierarchy (Mulder 2000: 52). Singhapakdi et. al (1994: 2) states that Thailand has often been categorized as a feminine culture that tends to place moral value on qualities such as interpersonal relationships and concern for the weak. Thai society also tends to have a strong aversion to uncertainty and people can act emotional, seek security and can often appear intolerant (Singhapakdi et. al 1994: 2). Thais will also be more idealistic since

adherence to “moral absolutes” represents a reduction in uncertainty. In a later study, Singhapakdi et al. (2000: 7) found that idealism and relativism had a strong effect on Thai managers ethical decision-making, and that idealistic Thai managers are more likely to have ethical intentions than do relativistic managers.

Power is seen as both desirable and something to be feared in Thailand. The social concept of “face” is therefore externalized in order to neutralize social discomfort and any potential conflict. Although this is a social display, it is to be taken as real in maintaining the larger social process. Thais don’t concern themselves with the deeper repercussions of their display because they take a short-term performative attitude, which Mulder (2000: 54) states, tends to see the brighter and amusing side of life. Those who properly play the roles characterized by Thai social life are generally successful and seen as ambitious, as one’s social persona determines how one is measured, rather than underlying, more abstract elements of morality and knowledge. Thai social life is indeed a theatre, but should be taken as real, for it is how Thais measure themselves against the world.

The only similarities between the German and Thai educational system is its rigid hierarchy and promotion of rote learning, and while German schools primarily focus on training the mind, Thai schools are responsible for all aspects of mind, body and spirit. According to Mulder (2000: 101), seventy-five percent of school time is devoted to socializing students in the image of the state. Schools emphasize Buddhist wisdom and principles in a highly organized and hierarchical manner to instill children with ethical qualities that the state desires. In general, the quality of education across Thailand is quite

poor, in comparison to Western standards, and good teachers are difficult to find. In the least, the school serves the purpose of socializing students with the right personality, character, disposition and conduct that promotes an aesthetic conception of morality and projects the world as morally simplistic (Mulder 2000: 30).

Thai schools promote a hierarchical and orderly populace that respects rules, social position, self-discipline and honor to the family (Mulder 2000: 30). Children are taught that moral people are those who keep themselves hygienically clean, act refined and never become a burden to their families or state. Community leaders, teachers and parents are presented as exemplary persons and social hierarchy requires cooperation, politeness, honesty and concern for family, which will result in moral persons and a smooth and orderly society.

Disciplined people are morally good: they are considerate people loved by others and are welcome company, quite unlike unruly types, who are shunned. Thus pupils had better respect the rules that are conducive to good order thus creating feelings of responsibility and discipline (Mulder 2000: 34).

Thai schools are the focal point of the wider social environment and are often placed at the center of the village. If a child acts morally in the school, they are seen as promoting the wholesomeness and discipline of the larger society (Mulder 2000: 33). Family and school are considered critical to producing moral people and social conformity is at the core of a Thai school's teachings.

German Socialization and Education

Gannon (1994: 66) asserts that because of Germany's history of shifting allegiances and borders, Germans have a deep longing for unity, and while some form of

individualism exists, it is seen as valuable only within the success of the larger social group. German social life can be compared to a highly synchronized symphony, where each person skillfully plays her instrument toward a collective experience of harmony. German society is more collective than American society, but less so than Thailand and other Southeast Asian nations (Gannon 1994: 70). Each person is expected to maximize her unique talents for the larger good of society.

However, because of educational and labor restraints, German workers do not enjoy the freedom of social mobility that one might see in the United States. Germans possess a passion for rules, order and hierarchy. For instance, one can see the public display of signs listing public acts that are forbidden, and acting inappropriately in public breaks serious social norms (Gannon 1994: 73). A social hierarchy exists in German culture, and while it is not oppressive, there is a general respect for elders, professionals and especially teachers, who early on are entrusted with determining a student's educational, and therefore professional route.

Like Thai people, Germans are concerned with maintaining social order, and there is a formality to German social life that emphasizes conformity and predictability (Gannon 1994: 78). Germans have a strong aversion to uncertainty and risk, which may explain their strong institutional safety nets and social programs such as social security, strong trade protectionism and labor unions. However, while Germans may aspire to maintain social harmony, this is often violated in the face of aggressive social inconsistencies. Germans are restrained by their historical traditions, but also commonly break them (Palazzo: 2002: 195).

Germans also place a high value on social distance between individuals in face-to-face communication and Germans are commonly perceived as gruff and unfriendly (Nees 2000 :36). Germans place value on long-term friendships usually initiated in school, and maintain a small but loyal social network and generally treat out-group members less intimately (Nees 2000 45). Germans are also perceived as more direct and explicit, and tend to verbalize their opinions about any number of social and political issues in direct ways, which outsiders may perceive as hostility. Germans are famous for arguing complex social issues in public and enjoy verbal sparring. This may foster a unique dynamic with Thai people who are more non-confrontational and concerned with maintaining social harmony.

German society is famous for a highly regulated and rigorous primary school educational system, but also criticized for being inflexible and slow to adapt to modern social and economic demands (Ardah 1995: 236). This hierarchical system plays a large role in the socialization of individuals, which carries over into larger social institutions, and especially in the place of work. Children are seen as being “trained” in German schools, but a strict adherence to a wide ranging academic curriculum often places German children far above most of their Western counterparts. Gannon (1994: 70) states that the German educational system epitomizes efficiency but not the flexibility and social mobility that American students expect. While rote pedagogic practices still exist, the German system is being liberalized as younger teachers enter the system, which some feel has lowered national academic standards.

However, the strength of the German system is still the *Gymnasium* level, where pupils are prepared to take a required examination at the age of nineteen that determines their university placement, and also their potential employment and social position in German society.

The traditional German view of school education, as in many continental countries, is that its function is to train the mind rather than to indulge character-building or to promote civic responsibility or the full use of leisure. These matters are seen as the role of parents, or maybe of the churches or of youth bodies such as scouts or guides (Ardah 1995: 240).

As a result, German schools are seen as dour lifeless places that are often deserted in the late afternoon, as German children partake in clubs and activities outside of school or in the larger community. German children tend to enjoy a varied leisurely life, centered around their families, who are seen as the primary organizers and reflections of one's social and academic pursuits (Ardah 1995: 241).

According to Ardah (1995: 242), Germans feel it is better for children to be a part of adult social life and the larger world rather than to be isolated in school. While schools are criticized for not adequately preparing students for political and civic participation, they are praised for the practicality with which students bring to later social endeavors. Over 60% of German students are said to have participated in certified apprenticeships or supervisory training programs, which serves as a form of social motivation for students to actively pursue careers and transition more easily into their given fields (Gannon 1995: 72). Several business analysts have commented that Germany's apprentice program is a strong reason for its business success. While there is increasing criticism of Germany's educational system, much of its hierarchy and academic rigor persists because Germans

place a high value on order and rules in society, and schools have a primary responsibility for contributing to their maintenance.

Theme Two: The Influence of Parenting

The Mother as Center of Thai Families

In Thai society, children are taught to love and respect their mothers, and mothers are considered the central figure of society (Mulder 2000: 70). The mother is to be revered and respected and her opinion of one's behavior is sought and necessary for cultivating social identity. The mother is idealized to almost fictitious and idyllic proportions. To betray the honor of one's mother is to be socially immoral and to defy the very foundation of Thai social structure. As a result, children have an unrealistic impression of motherhood, which makes adult social relations difficult, particularly for men who will eventually marry. The perpetuation of the mythical mother figure has placed enormous psychological burdens on Thailand's young men (Mulder 2000: 71).

While Thai children are socialized to believe that self-reliance is a positive moral social behavior, they are also taught to be overly sensitive to the opinions of their mothers and to depend on them for identity formation and self-worth. The child reciprocates this relationship by acting out of a sense of familial obligation, conformity, and dependence on their mothers. Children are taught to remain silent, defer to their mothers and to be morally indebted to her (Mulder 2000: 59). In general, Thai children are taught that the in-group, which consists of familial relations and is trustworthy and reliable, while outsiders are presented as fearsome, threatening and unreliable (Mulder 2000: 58).

Relationships with out-group members are generally superficial and pragmatically motivated, while relations with in-group members are more honest, sincere and caring.

Thais often perceive outsiders as a means to an end and as a necessary and unavoidable aspect of living in the modern world. Mulder (2000: 61) states, "Toward distant persons one shows external presentation and invests honor and prestige; among intimates one shows genuine responsibility and invests friendship and kindness." Power, authority and oppression are characterized with outside social relationships in order to maintain social harmony and hierarchy. A relationship with a manager from another country would take the form of a temporary contractual agreement, and can be broken off when it fails to meet one's needs. On the contrary, in-group relations are personal and obligatory, and the success or failure of that relationship determines one's social standing. This dynamic may prove particularly challenging for German managers attempting to motivate Thai workers.

Tightly Knit German Families

German families are generally tightly knit private units that actively do things together and maintain private associations with family relations and a few outside group-members. Gannon (1994: 77) states that there is a sharp distinction between friends and acquaintances in German culture because of the importance of school-age friendships, which tend to last a lifetime. Because the public school system is quite good, children associate with a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and it is common for German children to have friends whose parents come from all economic classes and professions (Ardagh 1995: 176). The educational system is divided and political power is dispersed throughout the country, so social relations are generally quite egalitarian. High labor wages can allow for a generally affluent and comfortable lifestyle, affording

children the most modern amenities. Germans have a prevailing lower-middle-class ethos because there is no great admiration for the rich, nor admonition for the poor.

German workers and technicians are much better off than others; middle managers earn far more in Germany than in Britain or Italy but senior managers do almost equally well in all four countries. For these reasons the differentials between top and bottom levels are lowest in Germany (Ardagh 1995: 175).

Germans are not known for socializing with neighbors and aside from cultural festivals and structured community activities, Germans are known for a more private community life. Privacy is highly valued by German families along with minding one's business and not meddling in others' affairs. Germans have also emphasized politeness in social relations, and children are taught to treat strangers and acquaintances with respect.

However, Germans are also known to be rude and aggressive in public, which Gannon (1994: 1994) concedes is one of many German social contradictions. For instance, because of their parents' long vacation periods and the German penchant for international travel, Children are socialized through family activities such as camping trips and long vacations. Yet children's lives are also very private and centered on the immediate family. Also, because the school system is seen as only responsible for a student's intellectual development, the family handles socialization and the child's emotional life. Therefore, parents are an integral aspect of children's social identity, which provides strong familial support but perhaps skepticism of outsiders.

Theme Three: Religion

Thai Buddhism

Anthropological approaches to religion are not concerned with questions of theology, but with how religion connects to the practice of everyday life. Berger & Luckman (1966: 40) say that religion, philosophy and art are historically the most important symbols in everyday experience and through language, we have the capacity to transport ourselves to new levels of experience. Geertz (1973: 127) says that religion can be designated as a “world view” that represents a people’s ethos or tone, character and quality of life. Geertz (1973: 127) says religious beliefs and everyday life confront and mutually confirm one another, and religion makes what is happening in the world emotionally acceptable through symbols, rituals and myths. Monaghan & Just (2000: 123) state that religious rituals are instances of ‘society worshipping itself’ while at the same time creating intense personal communal experiences that confirm social solidarity.

Mulder (2000: 92) asserts that over ninety percent of Thais identify themselves as Buddhist. However, Keyes (1995: 164) argues that Buddhist Southeast Asian society is “loosely structured,” which means that there is a lot of individual variation in the ways that people express their religious beliefs. Peter Jackson (2002: 155) contends that Buddhism is one of the officially recognized institutions that underpin the political and cultural identity of modern Thai society. There is a unique relationship between the theoretical and ritualistic aspects of Thai life, and that Buddhism and religion are the centre of all aspects of Thai society. Jackson (2002: 160) goes on to say that Buddhism in Thailand is in the midst of a tension between traditionalists and reformers.

Traditionalists interpret Buddhism as a collective experience of national solidarity, while reformers place individual salvation as the focus of their religion.

Keyes (1995: 158) continues that salvation in Buddhist societies involves the acquisition of merit, and a pursuit of the reduction of suffering, and that social maturation is not simply biological, but dependent on important religious rituals of transformation. Buddhism also explains long standing patterns of enduring relationships which last throughout the lifetime of an individual, and refers to one's social position as determined by Karma (Keyes 1995: 165).

Religion is essential to Thai education and is the basis for much of its curriculum and pedagogic philosophy, as well as ethical decision-making. Schools tie Buddhist teachings to fit into the larger social perception of society, and memorizing Buddhist thoughts defines good citizenship and social success (Mulder 2000: 102).

Buddhist teachings promote disciplined subjects, obligation, obedience and national stability. Mulder (2000: 102) asserts that students are taught that to lead an ethical life is to lead a quiet and wise life, and a strong knowledge of Buddhism insures this. Religion acts as a form of social cohesion in Thai society, and instills in the child attributes that the nation desires. Religion also serves to create order and happiness among individuals, while suffering is blamed on ignoring religion's lessons. Thai writer Tavavit Puntarigvivat (1998: 2) states that before the development of a capitalist economy, Buddhist values were the center of Thai life, but that those values have been replaced under capitalism, which is having a profound influence on Thai social life. One central question to be explored is, to what extent have European corporations altered traditional Thai social life?

Keyes (1997: 150) discusses the relationship between Buddhism and economic development in Thailand because some have insisted that it is unsuitable for a western model of business, because of its admonishment of accumulating worldly possessions for personal gain. Keyes concludes that the accumulation of wealth is often used for merit-making and for assisting others less fortunate in Thai society, and that the accumulation of wealth has a productive function in Thai culture that is in keeping with many Buddhist principles. Keyes (1997: 15) concludes that poverty is also not a positive social value and that wealth can also be perceived as manifesting good karma.

German Religion in the Private Sphere

German society is generally informed by the religious influences of Catholicism and Lutheranism. Gannon (1994: 81) states that more than 96% of Germans report they belong to a church, although Germans are not frequent churchgoers. Gannon (1994 :81) continues that Christianity fits nicely in German society because of the necessity to follow rules and doctrines. Germans observe all of the Christian holidays.

Germans also have created a mistrustful and contemptuous attitude towards commerce and business because of their reliance on the Kantian notion of utilitarianism and self-renunciation (Palazzo 2002: 195). According to Palazzo (2002: 197) Catholicism and Lutheranism lead to a more pessimistic assessment of the human condition which has reduced the influence of salvation as a redeeming cultural value.

There is a firm belief in German society that issues of religion are best kept private and that there be a separation between church and state. Palazzo (2002 :198) notes that Germans have an antagonistic view of business and morality and that there be a strict boundary between the public and private spheres. Germans therefore find it less

necessary to succeed in business than their American counterparts, who view business success and moral character as inextricably linked in the Puritan work ethic. What binds Germans is a common culture, history and tradition expressed in social norms and common expectations of appropriate behavior, which tends to supersede any direct influence from religious doctrine when dealing with daily ethical decisions.

Theme Four: Germans and Their Business Practices

German Business Practices

Bettina Palazzo (2002) states that Germans have an uncomfortable relationship with ethics, and that ethical guidelines are rarely if ever explicitly written in codes of conduct, rules or mission statements for three reasons, including: 1) Business is generally seen as less moral than other aspects of society, 2) Germans have a strong normative culture and don't find it necessary to state ethical guidelines and 3) The public and private spheres are separate and ethics is seen as a private matter.

The public spheres of business and politics were dominated by the state. German citizens retreated into their private realms and tried to shield this private space from the intruding state. The result of this separation was a split morality - one for the private sphere and one for the public sphere. The Nazi regime tried to reunite the two spheres by introducing a national ethic of comradeship. Of course this totalitarian endeavor resulted in even greater resentment against public invasion into private morality, which exists until today (Palazzo 2002).

Palazzo (2002) explains that German society is generally more homogenous than other western nations and strong underlying social structures define status, behavior and norms, and that German people are bound by strong moral traditions that are not often questioned. Therefore, German companies find it unnecessary to articulate an ethical code or set of guidelines, and when they are introduced, are greeted with mistrust. Standards of social behavior are perceived

as a form of hypocrisy and in infringement on privacy (Palazzo: 2002). Palazzo concludes that it will be difficult to introduce ethics into the German workplace because of longstanding cultural norms and a mistrust of top-down moral visions. However, because of recent ethical scandals in German business and the more globally directed economy that is based on American corporate standards, German companies are beginning to grapple with the issue of ethics.

According to Colin Crouch (1993: 80) Germany can be characterized as a mixed economy that embraces market forces but has strong economic protectionisms and constraints. Germany has a strong history as a guild system, where workers would specialize and perfect a specific craft, and membership in a *Kammer*, or professional chamber, was compulsory for those seeking any kind of work. To this day, the *Kammer* plays a significant role in mediating between the German political state and trade unions, which seeks to balance the pursuit of profit and the public good (Crouch 1993: 86). Labor unions do not have as antagonistic relationship to the private sector as they do in the United States, and union leaders are known to collaborate with corporate leadership for mutual concerns. The German labor market is therefore interconnected, as corporations in the open market are still held responsible for reinvesting and training German workers. The idea of a skilled craftsman is still a potent legacy in German work and organizational life, and the pride in one's skill is embodied in the culture and social structure of German industry.

German organizations are characterized by long-term relationships that are based on a complex web of relationships on all levels of the institutional structure (Crouch 1993: 90). It is not uncommon for Germans to prefer a strong visionary leadership style

that is comfortable with delegating responsibility and decision-making to all levels of the organization (Gannon 1994: 69). Germans have a firm belief in one another's professional capacities and therefore tend to relinquish control to their professional colleagues, which reinforces a tight professional trust. It will be interesting to see if this is also true when working with Thais.

German organizations can also be rule-guided and have formal business environments that strictly enforce rank, hierarchy and social space. Although German organizations are hierarchically structured, they also tend to not be centralized, but compartmentalized, which may foster institutional segregation, and cause information to move slowly between departments (Gannon 1994: 75). Maintaining physical distance is another important German social norm, and Germans keep a larger social distance than Thais and other Europeans. Germans also value private physical space and a quiet, unobtrusive work environment, which may reflect a sense of isolationism when working among them. Thais on the other hand are highly interdependent and highly communicative at work.

The German communication style can also be characterized as direct and reliant on a large amount of background information and context when making a decision (Gannon 1994: 76). Germans tend to participate in lengthy, data-filled, but also explicit negotiations that may take enormous amounts of time. However, Germans are also obvious in the way that they feel during business meetings, and are not known for highly contextual or inferred communication, which may be challenging compared to Thailand's more high-context and subtle communication style.

Therefore, the German workplace reflects the values of a strong educational system based on professional excellence that fosters egalitarian social relationships, based on intellectual confidence and cohesive historical and cultural norms (Palazzo 2002: 214). Germans also carry a deep respect for professional competence fostered by an intense educational and apprenticeship system which fosters strong social and ethical norms in the values of quality and competence. It may be fair to say that Germans carry strong collectivist and individualistic tendencies, which creates strong individual egos but also larger cultural cohesion.

Thai Business Practices

It is important to note in this section that the target Thai population for this study often has international business and educational experience, mainly from Germany and the United States. Stage (1999: 2) states that many aspects of Thai culture influence how Thais conduct themselves in business such as politeness, the importance of establishing workplace relationships, an awareness of social stature and the organizational rank of those one interacts with. Thais like to have fun at work. For example, the word for work and for party carry the same root “ngan”. Bradford (1992: 2) states that Thailand’s history as an agricultural nation where people live and work together in groups representing kinship and friendship, has transferred over into the modern place of work, and therefore work has a playful social character. However, one should never mistake one as being more or less important than the other. Thais have a social, active and communicative orientation toward work that values relationships that are caring and reciprocal. Thai employees have a long-term view of work relationships and they work to develop lasting work friendships over time.

Mulder (2000: 60) explains how relationships between outsiders and insiders promote a different hierarchical value system within Thai society and in the workplace, where power is determined by association and background. Thais have difficulty trusting outsiders, who they perceive as authoritarian and untrustworthy, and who don't take the time to learn their customs and traditions (Stage: 1999: 9). For example, a father can be trusted because he is expected to be good and his hierarchical position indeed makes him good. Stage (1999: 12) states that Thais have experienced years of frustration in the workplace with foreign business managers who treat them poorly, and who don't respect or attempt to integrate the Thai perspective. However, Thais will respect business managers, not for intrinsic worth, but because of the power and authority he may wield against you. It is therefore socially redeemable to make out-side relations as smooth as possible and to avoid conflict at all costs, which yields short-term but practical social rewards. It is for these in-group and out-group social patterns that exploring ethical behavior between Thais and Germans may prove most thought provoking.

The ethical decision-making of Thai people varies greatly from European notions of individualism, self-promotion and competition. Mulder (1996) characterizes Thai ethics as a rigid social structure imposed by state and social institutions, but is primarily located in the heart of the family. Mulder (1996: 185) says the most important ethical guidelines include moral obligation to others and a sense of concern for others' well-being.

Mulder (1997: 215) explains that this "hierarchical view is potently enforced by its moral dimension, expressed in the ideology surrounding parents, the 'cult' of the mother, the locus of consciousness in relationships, and the ideas of obligation and debt-

of-gratitude.” Social life is therefore a continuation of familial interconnectedness influenced by Thai Buddhism and the social indoctrination of the public educational system. Mulder (2000: 127) continues that the Thai people have learned throughout history to expect the government to be in charge of keeping society in good working order. Therefore, in the workplace, Thais have come to expect a personalized leader capable of exerting force on the external world. This may play into the hands of European organizations from Germany, but also has profound ethical implications for the Thai people. Society is therefore a moral rather than legal construct which operates on historical tradition rather than the adherence to legal terms and explicit laws (Mulder 2000: 127). Adherence to hierarchy and social status confirms the moral social construct in the interpersonal relationships of people as they adhere to their social roles, respect others, and act in moral obligation of their fellow person. How these assumptions are challenged when Thais encounter Germans from another culture with differing ethical assumptions will be the essential subject of this paper.

Summary

Chapter Two identifies the underlying social and historical influences on Thai and German ethical decision-making including socialization, parenting, education and religion in order to clarify similarities and differences in the ways they fundamentally view the world. This chapter also attempts to highlight the contrasting business perspectives of the German and Thai people, in order to show the ways in which they socialize and conduct business on a daily basis, to illustrate potential obstacles to communicating ethical-decisions in the workplace.

Chapter Three presents a review of literature which highlights the three main subject areas to be explored in the study, including communication, culture and ethics. Communication is explored as a form of social structure from the ideas of Bennett, Berger and Luckman, Gadamer and Habermas. Culture is explained from the perspective of Critical Hermeneutics including Geertz, Selya Benhabib and Goffman, to illustrate the symbolic expressions of social communities. And ethics is explained from the perspectives of Mulder and Habermas to show how communication and culture intersect in the communicative argumentation of individuals within a particular social context who co-create the meaning of their ethical identities.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH CATEGORIES

Introduction

This study concerns itself with the ontological nature of identity in global business contexts and what the interpretation of language asserts about ethics to point to the underlying cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs of Germans and Thais. A main assumption of this project is that a conversation between two people that is made into a text can be interpreted for multiple meanings, and can lead us toward an enlarged understanding of the challenge of making ethical decisions in cross-cultural contexts (Denzin 1989: 12).

The theoretical orientation of this work is divided into three areas including, 1) Communication, 2) Culture and 3) Ethics, because the literature points to these three axis as configuring an essential constellation that expresses our understanding of ethical decision-making between cultures. Communication will be explored drawing from the perspective of traditional academic specialists in the field of communication studies, but mainly from the ideas of social philosophers Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, Hans-George Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas because they are concerned with exploring everyday patterns of lived experience in the form of language, conversation and dialogue in order to locate underlying social patterns and structures of our social world (Denzin 1989: 14).

Culture is explored from the ideas of interpretive anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who is concerned with the process of “thick description” to produce a richly detailed account of lived experience in the form of narrative which reflects a deeper structure by

which individuals or groups guide their behavior (Geertz 1973: 11). The study of Ethics rests on the intersection of communication and culture and is expressed in the ideas of Niels Mulder, who specializes in Thai social life and Jurgen Habermas, who proposes that ethical decisions are expressed in communication and are drawn from the utterance of a mutually recognized normative background (Habermas 1979: 3).

Category One: Communication as Social Structure

According to Bennett (1998: IX), there are two main schools of thought regarding intercultural communication: The theory-into-practice school, and the theory-into-research school. The orientation of this exploration is interpretive, or hermeneutic, and more in line with the theory-into-practice approach. The Critical Hermeneutic approach to research attempts to make the world of lived experience directly accessible to the reader by capturing the emotions, voices and actions of the Thai and German people doing business with one another in Thailand in order for those lived experiences to express their process of ethical decision-making and its relationship to inter-cultural dynamics (Denzin 1989: 10).

Bennett (1998: 30) explains that the intercultural study of ethics has attempted to rectify the dualism that was once proposed between ethical universalism and ethical relativism. Bennett (1998: 30) proposes that “ethical actions must be judged within a cultural context. There is no universal ethical behavior.” Ethical actions are judged within the cultural context where communicative action takes place, but people are also likely to interpret an event from a variety of world views, so there is never a single right or wrong answer. An ethical action is constructed and articulated in language by humans within

cultural norms who thereby take responsibility for the realities they create (Bennett 1998: 30).

Berger and Luckman (1966: 22-23) contend that ordinary language used in everyday life *is* in fact our world, it provides meaning, and it allows for the intersubjectivity that we share with one another. We could not make meaning of the world were it not for language, which continually points us toward the experience at hand as we employ it to interpret our actions (Berger & Luckman 1966: 26). It is through face-to-face interaction that communication allows us to oscillate between patterned typifications and the uniqueness of the social context. Berger & Luckman (1966: 39) state that, “Because of the capacity to transcend the ‘here and now,’ language bridges different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole.” Berger & Luckman (1966: 45) continue that language and communication intersects the universal and the “immediate pragmatic interests of mine, (and) others by my general situation in society.” This pragmatic event of communication between Thais and Germans will be the central focus of this paper.

Gadamer (Bernstein 1983: 126) states that “Meaning and understanding are not psychological processes, discrete events, or states of mind: they are essentially and intrinsically linguistic.” Gadamer contends that our prejudgments or fore-knowledge allows us to comprehend new experiences and then make an interpretation. For Gadamer, “The medium of all human horizons is linguistic, and the language that we speak (or that rather speaks through us) is essentially open to understanding alien horizons” (Bernstein 1983: 144). Language contains our culture, history, traditions; however, it also expresses the immediacy of the topic at hand and the temporality to encounter and communicate

with another who may be radically different. Gadamer explains that our prejudices inform our ethical know-how, but that an ethical decision is only specified by deliberating about what is appropriate to a particular situation (Bernstein 1983:147). The event of language allows Thais and Germans to put forth their unique hermeneutical situation toward the topic at hand and in the act of communication decide upon an appropriate ethical response.

According to Jurgen Habermas (1979: 67), language is the medium of three interrelated worlds where a relationship exists among “the external world, our social world and a particular inner world.” When one acts communicatively, we express the symbolically pre-structured segment of reality that constitutes our institutions, traditions and cultural values (Habermas 1979: 66). In every instance of communication where individuals attempt to reach mutual understanding, participants employ comprehensible sentences in order to raise three validity claims simultaneously including, claiming the truth for content, claiming rightness or appropriateness for norms, and truthfulness for the intention expressed (Habermas 1976: 66). When two people reach mutual understanding, speech sets itself apart from the external regions of nature, society and internal nature to become a reality in and of itself (Habermas 1976: 68). In communication that reaches mutual understanding, language allows participants to agree that what is said is true, it is appropriate for the context in which we inhabit, and it says something unique about the individuals who are involved. This is essential when exploring inter-cultural communication between Thais and Germans because they bring diverging social worlds to the communicative event, which are unified in language.

Category Two: Interpreting Culture

According to anthropologists John Monaghan and Peter Just (2000: 34), culture is the human capacity to conceptualize the world and to communicate those conceptions symbolically. They continue that our genetic disposition for language and symbolic communication has allowed humans to inherit acquired characteristics in the form of knowledge from generation to generation (Monaghan 2000: 35). Monaghan and Just argue that more modern anthropologists are abandoning the belief in the objectivity of the researcher and moving toward a more ethnographic, participatory research orientation where the researcher is an integral part of the culture she explores (Monaghan 2000: 29). Studying culture, they continue, is similar to the metaphor of a fish in water in that we are immersed in culture and, therefore, often have difficulty distinguishing it. The strength of this study will be the direct experience of the researcher in the inter-cultural contacts between Thai and German people, which will allow the uniqueness of the data to find a comparative spatial and temporal context (Monaghan 2000: 26).

Clifford Geertz (1973: 5) argues that the concept of culture is a semiotic inter-subjective exploration in search of meaning. Geertz (1973: 14) sees the study of culture as the enlargement of the universe of human discourse. Geertz (1973:14) continues, “Understanding a people’s culture exposes their normalness without reducing their peculiarity. It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity.” The Critical Hermeneutic orientation for exploring ethical decision-making will be used to fashion a narrative that becomes an account of the events witnessed to get at the heart of what is being interpreted (Geertz 1973: 18). The task will be to not only record what is said, but to “find the underlying structures of meaning of

culture that inform our subjects' acts (Geertz 1973: 27). There is no overarching goal to be reached or conceptual framework to be tested, as ethnography seeks to contribute to what Geertz (1973: 29) calls, a "refinement of debate." By studying ethical decision-making between Thais and Germans, we initiate a debate about the assumptions they bring into the communicative act which allows us to grow closer to a richer understanding of each culture.

Barbara Abou-El-Haj (1997: 141) explains that the dynamic between cultures is expressed in language where issues such as power, identity and domination are negotiated. Abou-El-Haj (1997: 141) describes how power and control are exerted by the dominant culture over another in order to set parameters of expectation and organization, thereby altering perceptions of identity and relationships. Stuart Hall (1997: 42) contends that identity is essentially linguistic and that when we say something, we assert a political, social and economic value system. When we engage with another in language, we put forth an ethical value system that is likely different from their own. This linguistic difference could be what Hall refers to as "Global Mass Culture," which is characterized by Western technology, concentration of mass labor, homogenization and accumulation of capital (Hall 1997: 28).

Philosopher and Ethicist Seyla Benhabib (1990: 27) states that the study of ethics and moral principles stems from culture itself in the institutions, markets and social practices of people. However, ethics is also limited by culture in the sense that the repertoire of meanings individuals interpret in a given situation are culturally bound. Benhabib (1990: 27) says, "Morality is a central domain in the universe of values that define cultures, and it is cultures that supply the motivational patterns and symbolic

interpretations in light of which individuals think of narrative histories.” The ways that we think about and interpret ourselves in the world are self-created but bound by culture. This concept of the self as narrative will be a critical aspect of this research based on the work of Ricoeur and Kearney.

Erving Goffman explained that when behavior and ideology become relatively discreet, enduring and autonomous, we call these patterns institutions (Goffman 1967: 25). Emily Durkheim argued that the development of organizational societies is accompanied by the disintegration of traditional patterns of social order, as common beliefs, ideas and attitudes are shattered in deference to the occupational structure (Morgan 1997: 121). Morgan (1997: 130) states that we can explore organizational cultures as well as nationalistic cultures from an anthropological perspective. Morgan (1997: 130) says, “One becomes aware of the patterns of interaction between individuals, the language that is used, the images and themes explored in conversation, and the various rituals of daily routine.” Morgan continues that any organizational culture contains a variety of world views and competing value systems that create a mosaic of organizational realities. Studying the social worlds that Thais and Germans create and then put forth in their linguistic encounters may well expose the hidden ideological or contextual meanings that encompass global corporations.

Category Three: Ethics as the Intersection of Communication and Culture

Ethical legitimacy in organizations is found in our language, and our inter-subjectivity becomes our possibility to forge an ethical future. Language is a mutually creative endeavor and a form of social action that connects social actors in a continual process of becoming (Herda 2000: 23). Herda (2000: 23) continues that language has

increasingly become the focal point of understanding institutional concerns such as ethics, because language is shaped within the social context, rather than acting as a symbol of cognitive structures. Language is a consensual domain that expresses a mutually recognized pattern of activity. As Germans and Thais work together to co-create the meaning of their organizational identities, they construct a linguistically mediated social context that is dependent on one another for its mutual acceptance and interpretation. Language and communication is therefore the fulcrum of this exploration, as it represents culture, history and traditions, and mediates the mutually recognized life-world that Thais and Germans attempt to make ethical decisions about.

Stage (1999: 5) states that structural context refers to the circumstances in which a communicative act takes place, and directly effects the participants. The social norms in a context provide the intercultural communicators with specific information about how to conduct themselves. Exploring the interplay between communication and cultures is vital when investigating ethics, because institutions in Thailand such as government agencies or global corporations influence cultural value systems, and an individual's previous social identity becomes regulated in institutional cultures. Communication expresses cultural and institutional value systems, and the actions by superiors, managers or workers express an ethical orientation in the disbursement of rewards or punishments, which reinforces institutional norms (Monaghan 2000: 62). A specific set of cultural and social values exist in global organizations in Thailand, and how they alter the patterns of behavior of Thai people, as well as what kind of social identity is created, will be explored as a critical aspect of ethical decision-making.

According to Herda (2000: 28) people of different traditions and different histories encounter one another within a linguistically constituted world that presents itself in communication. Hermeneutics attempts to get at the heart of ethical decision-making by watching language “at work,” as participants reach a common understanding or shared view that is simultaneously embedded in relationships, but says something about the relationship itself (Habermas 2001: 25). For instance, when a German and Thai manager are in a conversation, their language refers not only to the physical world, but also the temporal world, their background, culture and traditions, which allows them to negotiate meaning in the here-and-now, but it also points towards a future act that does not yet exist. The world depends on the continued existence of linguistic expressions to project itself upon living systems, which is always dynamic, creating meaning, and involves the mutual exchange of speaking and listening to provoke interpretation (Herda 2000: 28).

Ethical decision-making is the sharing of the life-world and the reproduction of that life in discourse. Actual participation rather than abstract ideals prevents ethical distortions and coersion, because each of our ideas or prejudices is placed before each other for critique and interpretation. Habermas (1981: 14) states that in the context of communicative action, a person’s opinion counts if they are members of a linguistic community who can orient themselves to an inter-subjectively recognized set of validity claims. It is this process of rational decision-making, based on perspective-taking, and inclusion of the others’ interests as equal to our own, that prevents domination, as we share an action that we agree to, because each of us is contingent upon its acceptance.

Summary

Chapter Three presents a review of literature that explains this study's three research categories, including communication, culture and ethics. Communication rests on the underlying theory of language as sustaining and transmitting cultural and social values, and is the crucial element in binding participant's social worlds when co-creating an ethical decision. Culture is the symbolic expression of the inter-subjective life-world of a community of people over time. And ethics is the intersection of communication and culture in the act of language as we test one another's claim to the truth in argumentation to critique our communicative norms and the legitimacy of the social context. Chapter Four discusses the research protocol including the theoretical framework, research protocol, data analysis, background of the researcher and summary.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH THEORY AND PROTOCOL

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research orientation of Critical Hermeneutics, which places the researcher at the center of a social exploration to enlarge his understanding of how ethical identities are formed in global contexts with at least two cultures, in the act of language, conversation and the co-creation of meaning. The three main themes which act as the conceptual framework for the analysis include: Discourse Ethics, Storytelling and Narrative Identity.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Hermeneutic Theory

The study of ethics in the western tradition is informed by Aristotle, John Locke and Immanuel Kant, but this study is “neo-Aristotelian,” which is based on the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas, who rejected the Kantian argument of ethical “universalizability” to instead form a contextually embedded, and situationally sensitive judgment of particulars (Benhabib 1990: 3). There is no universal ethics or theoretical formula in which to make pre-determined ethical decisions other than in intersubjective speech acts that we share with others in the life-world (Benhabib 1990: 6). Habermas developed his “Discourse Ethics” from his assertion that to name the conditions of an “ideal speech situation” entails strong ethical assumptions. The “ideal speech situation” requires that all participants recognize the rights of all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in moral conversation, and that when conversation ensues, symmetrical rights are granted to all participants (Benhabib 1990: 6). The purpose of this research is to explore if participants in global organizations communicate

fractured, ethnocentric speech acts or a unified and inclusive social narrative to other organizational members, who struggle to identify themselves in the organization's shared narrative.

Habermas' Discourse Ethics

Jurgen Habermas' (2001: viii) central principle is that for a norm to be valid, its consequences for the satisfaction of everyone's interests must be acceptable to all participants in a practical discourse. Just as maintaining social harmony is an integral component of Thai consciousness, Habermas' discourse ethics model requires that perspective-taking be reciprocal and empathy be a critical aspect of any reasoned agreement. Organizational life is essentially social; therefore, a discourse ethics that necessitates a public discussion which proposes that decisions be fair to all can also act to challenge prevailing aspects of group-think and the over-reliance on technology that are often pervasive in organizational contexts.

Habermas develops his theory of discourse ethics in response to the prevailing scientific method of ethical reasoning, which attempts to universalize a concept of ethics into an abstract theory of ideals, which he feels are disconnected from the dilemmas of everyday life, and therefore, not meaningful to those faced with ethical decisions. Habermas (2001: 18) says, "In everyday communication, cognitive interpretations, moral expectations, expressions and evaluations cannot help overlapping and interpenetrating. Reaching understanding in the life-world requires a cultural tradition that ranges across the whole spectrum, not just the fruits of science and technology." For Habermas, language acts to unify all the disparate influences of ethics including science, philosophy,

religion and even art because it expresses all of these interests in the act of everyday language.

Everyday language is a kind of practical wisdom that allows us to influence one another in less coercive ways. Habermas' Discourse Ethics is applicable to inter-cultural communication and ethics in this study, because it does not argue to be universal or grounded in any particular culture or tradition. As Thais and Germans continually support and defend their decisions in conversation, there is never simply one interpretation of an event but a "reflective equilibrium" that illustrates the limits of one another's cultural horizon (Benhabib 1990: 8). In other words, ethical decisions are the never-ending process of argumentation, reflection and action.

Coming to an understanding is the process of bringing about an agreement on the presupposed basis of validity claims that can be mutually recognized. In everyday life, we start from a background consensus pertaining to those interpretations taken for granted among participants. As soon as this consensus is shaken, and the presupposition that certain validity claims are satisfied (and) is suspended, the task of mutual interpretation is to achieve a new definition of the situation which all participants can share (Habermas 1976: 3).

Habermas (2002: 67) asserts that we test our claims to the truth not in a competitive form of strategic action, but in a process of argumentation where individuals agree to cooperate to come to agreements where they have been collectively convinced of something. "Every agreement, whether produced for the first time or reaffirmed is based on grounds or reasons" (Habermas 2001: 19). Argumentation is the sharing of the life-world and the reproduction of that life in discourse. Actual participation rather than abstract ideals prevents ethical distortions and coercion, because each of our ideas or prejudices is placed before each other for critique and interpretation. It is this process of

rational decision-making based on perspective-taking and inclusion of the others' interests as equal to our own, that prevents domination. As we share an action we agree to, each of us is contingent upon its acceptance. Focusing on this process of communication in argumentation and reasoning is what is so sorely needed in the research on intercultural ethics.

Jurgen Habermas' (2001: 58) theory of discourse ethics adequately frames ethical decision-making among Thai and German people in global contexts because participants themselves coordinate their plans of action consensually in the inter-subjective recognition of validity claims. In other words, in the process of normal language, people come to an agreement about something by testing their claim to the truth, and in that exchange they share a social world in which to take a social action (Habermas 2001: 58). Language and conversation simultaneously binds individuals into a rationally motivated pursuit of ethical reasoning.

Ethical legitimacy is not accomplished through a complex system of data, scientific theory or highly paid cross-cultural experts skilled in persuasion, but by the ordinary use of language through which the common life-world expresses itself (Habermas 1979: 353). Language is the ultimate arbiter of power among people within organizations because we all possess the capacity to speak, argue and participate in competing interpretations. Public space is therefore necessary for the life-world to be expressed. According to Habermas (1996: 360), "The public sphere is not a tightly held organization but a loosely networked system of opinions that functions on the elementary basis of language." Finally, language is an open medium that circulates throughout the organizational setting and can translate even the most specialized code into common

thoughts (Habermas 1996: 348). German and Thai managers and leaders can legitimize themselves and their ethical-decision-making by allowing a spontaneous public space in which competing interpretations of people's actions are critically assessed.

Ricoeur And Kearney's Ethical Narrative

While language is the carrier of culture, history and tradition, and the act of normal everyday language grounds us in the interconnectedness of the life-world, stories are the most common way in which people communicate their experiences in organizations and is the most widely recognized communicative act. However, stories are more than a form of description or entertainment, but a form of ethical knowledge, and how they are composed expresses an ethical intent. The stories Thais and Germans tell of their experiences in organizations with one another will act as powerful evidence of ethical decision-making.

Language allows collective identities to put forth their social reality in the participation of narrative to "give itself an image of itself," thus illuminating the subject of the communicative act (Ricoeur 1992: 182). Without imagination, there is no action, as narrative articulates what is hidden, and it is in storytelling where we take on the imaginative function of developing practical possibilities (Ricoeur 1991: 178). Because language is polysemic, Ricoeur asserts the primacy of context in distinguishing meaning between communicative participants.

Ricoeur (1991: 44) states, "The use of contexts involves, in turn, an activity of discernment which is exercised in the concrete exchange of messages between interlocutors, and which is modeled on the interplay of question and answer." Critical Hermeneutics is concerned with meaning and reducing misunderstanding, which is

necessary because of the chasms often created between inter-cultural communicators. And while language is essential for communication, Ricoeur (1984: 47) asserts that in true interpretation we forget language and perceive what is common and peculiar between us, and never truly grasp one another, but instead experience the difference between others and ourselves. “Man comes to know himself only by the detour of understanding, which is, always, an interpretation” (Ricoeur 1984: 52).

For Ricoeur (1984: 32) there is an “interweaving reference” between our lives and the stories that we tell about them. “If there is no human experience that is not already mediated by symbolic systems and, among them, by narratives, it seems vain to say, as I have, that action is in quest of a narrative” (Ricoeur 1984: 74). Stories unify life experience in the emplotment of events into a meaningful whole. Our identities are essentially narrative in that the emplotment of life’s events represents an ethical point of view. Narrative makes possible the ethical sharing of a common world because there is an inter-play between the story-teller, the story itself, the listener, and the world we inhabit (Kearney 2002: 150). The ethical qualification of a story comes from the world itself, because there is both an internal coherence to the narrative structure and an external coherence to the world it points to (Ricoeur 1984: 47). Stories need to be cohesive within themselves in order to be intelligible and communicable; but must also be believable, as they reflect the social world.

For Richard Kearney (1999: 26), all identity is essentially narrative and all historical communities are constituted by stories. He says, “When one recognizes that one’s identity is fundamentally narrative in character, one discovers an ineradicable openness and indeterminacy at the root of one’s collective memory.” In this way,

individual stories allow us to see our place within a larger life story--a human story. We are dependant upon the identities of others to form our own. In addition, we cannot form our identity without understanding the history of our origin. Social, political and organizational problems emerge when we are stuck in an historical interpretation of the past that fails to imagine us differently (Kearney 1999: 26). Stories allow us to transcend the stagnant repetition of memory in order to reconfigure our life histories into a new future.

The way the events of the narrative are configured by the speaker or author express an ethical intent because of what the teller chooses to include or exclude from the narrative. Kearney (2002: 154) calls this choice of emplotment essentially ethical, in that what we consider valuable or worthy of preservation is usually included in the story, which reveals the ethical orientation of the author. In short, the primordial mode of communication is storytelling, and in the stories that Germans and Thais tell about their experiences with one another and the organizations and institutions in which they inhabit, we can learn about their ethical perspectives, how they view one another, and the world they live in.

In short, narrative is the essential mode of communication and provides the underlying structure and meaning of the events of our lives. We say that our identities are essentially narrative because the emplotment of disparate events into a unified whole expresses our particular and collective perspective, as it is continually re-appropriated in the process of telling and acting within each other's life stories. The stories that Germans and Thais tell about their experiences with one another and the organizations and

institutions in which they inhabit, teaches us about their ethical perspectives, as well as how they view one another and the world they live in.

Summary

The review of literature develops an argument that exploring ethical decision-making in German corporations operating in Thailand can be pursued from the perspective of Critical Hermeneutics by analyzing the language, communication, argumentation and storytelling of individuals within global contexts. By focusing on the everyday communicative patterns of participants in the act of conversation, Thais and Germans assert their cultural and historical worldviews as well as their ethical orientations. In this sense, all communication is essentially ethical, in that what we assert into the life-world is critically reviewed by others and becomes the basis of subsequent actions and perspectives. The ways Thais and Germans choose to arrange, edit, narrate and communicate their perspectives is also an ethical choice because they have social repercussions. Finally, the ways they describe themselves and their actions within organizations determines their personal identity and collective identity as others respond to what they say in the workplace. By engaging and observing how Thais and Germans interact on these communicative levels, we may find patterns and habits that may broaden our scope of ethical decision-making.

The results of a recent pilot study on this very subject prove fruitful in examining the intersection of communication, culture and ethics and its relationship to Critical Hermeneutics. Chapter Five of this document explains the research protocol, the pilot study, and the selected participant, in addition to the preliminary findings which inspires continued exploration of this topic.

CHAPTER FIVE:

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

The research protocol includes communicating with Germans and Thais who actively engage in communication in global contexts across a wide range of business activities, roles and hierarchical levels. The conversations took place in German organizations doing business in Thailand in a variety of formal and informal contexts, times and places, including conference rooms, cafes and restaurants. Conversations with research participants were recorded and transcribed into a text and analyzed for meaning, focusing on the areas illuminated in the theoretical framework and review of literature. This chapter includes the results of a pilot field study, the researcher's journal and the researcher's background, concluding with a summary.

Entrée to the Research Site

I was initially skeptical of the success of this research project because it had been difficult to contact specific people and establish appointments across such a great distance. However, after a day in Bangkok, and numerous phone calls from my hotel, it was not difficult to find Germans and Thais doing business together. Overall, the experience of contacting and participating in conversations with both Thais and Germans was immensely enjoyable, engaging and informative, and I have fond memories and feelings for almost all of the participants who engaged in conversation and offered me personal insights.

My entrée to the research site began in the most obvious place. The German-Thai Chamber of Commerce was the catalyst for establish relationships with both Germans and Thais and acted as the main context in which my conversations took place. This

eventually branched out to other sites which included Otto's German Restaurant, Daimler Chrysler's Bangkok headquarters, the Goethe Institute, the German Embassy in Thailand, a housing complex for German executives, a new train station in Bangkok, as well as my hotel café, and, rather spontaneously, during a brief hiatus on the island of Koh Chang.

Otto's German Restaurant on Sukhumvit Soi 1, is the perfect illustration of the combination of research participation and information-gathering that made this exploration such a joyful experience. Otto's is a quintessential Bavarian style eatery with long wooden tables, large beer glasses and classic German food. It is also where Thais and Germans meet formally and informally to discuss work, negotiate and get to know one another. The Germans in particular emphasize fun as an integral part of their social lives, and as a way to blow off steam. Entering Otto's is a unique blend of German boisterousness and Thai refinement and was a treasure of observation, interaction and conversation.

Because the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce is so essential to disseminating information to both Thai and German companies and people, the people who work there were energetic about participating in the project and always recommended someone else, both Thai and German, who I should speak to. What was most interesting and something that I did not expect, was how many Thais had been educated in Germany who spoke German fluently, which added a level of understanding and depth to our conversations that I had not anticipated. All of the participants also spoke English proficiently, which was also very helpful in carrying out the project. My own ability to speak German was also crucial when engaging with the participants, because I was able to extend the

conversations when they transitioned German, which also enhanced my credibility and trustworthiness for the participants.

Although the conversations will be described more thoroughly in Part Six of the data presentation portion of the dissertation, I will mention that the participants were open, honest and thoughtful about their answers and took great pleasure in their interactions. I was often treated to delicious Thai and German meals, beer, coffee, and of course, bratwurst, and most of the participants' illustrated great personal candor, generosity and concern about my project and stay in Thailand. While they were sometimes skeptical of the research orientation of Critical Hermeneutics, they seemed to respect that it focused on their words and stories rather than numerical data or a questionnaire.

Invitation to Participants

Participants in the study were asked to participate in a research conversation about their experiences working with Thais or Germans and to reflect on ethical decision-making. Research participants were contacted by letter, e-mail and telephone. A copy of the Invitation to Participants is included in this document as an appendix. No other preparation was given to the participants. Most refused to fill out consent forms and only wanted to reveal basic demographic data in writing. The conversations lasted at least one hour and often longer.

List of Research Participants

Thai Participants

Sirigul Sakornrattanagul, Public Relations Manager, German Thai Chamber of Commerce

Watchara Rujiroatpipatana, Assistant Computer Section, German Thai Chamber of Commerce

Pagaval Ratpanpairoj, Advisor to the Economic Dept., Federal Republic of Germany Embassy

Sirirart Sukarapak, German-Thai Economic Consultant

Laongsin Inpata, Information Officer, German Thai Chamber of Commerce

General Boonchuay, Thai Air-Force advisor

German Participants

Dagmar Rutenberg, Public Information Officer, Goethe Institute

Valerie Mosberg, Junior Economist, German-Thai Chamber of Commerce

Sebastian Doring, Asia Pacific Conference Officer, German-Thai Chamber of Commerce

Robert Stefani, Marketing Coordinator, Gessellschaft fur Handwerkmesse

Andrea Wintermantel, Junior Lawyer, German Thai Chamber of Commerce

Wolfgang Schneider, Owner-General Manager, Prem Mansion

James Brunner , Owner-General Manager, Plaloma Cliff Resort

Max Felker, Trade Relations, German-Thai Chamber of Commerce

Horsd Mueller, Owner, Hattes' Restaurant

Markus Volmer, Technology Efficiency Expert, Daimler Chrysler

Background of the Researcher

As a college lecturer in Communication Studies, I have devoted my life's work to studying communication and have attained degrees in communication theory with a focus in journalism and a master's degree in organizational communication, and have long been fascinated with how people make meaning in complex organizations and institutions. I have worked in the fields of advertising, public relations and publishing before committing to a career in education. Since enrolling in the doctoral program in Organization and Leadership at the University of San Francisco, I have been able to blend my personal passions in the study of Critical Hermeneutics, which relies on the co-creation of meaning by individuals in the act of language as they determine their ethical

obligations to create just social institutions. Because of my own German roots and my recent development work in Thailand, this document is the beginning of a personal and professional pursuit combining my interests in communication, culture and ethics, which are also the foundation of the interpretive path of Critical Hermeneutics, where ethical actions are housed within the symbolic interaction of language, which expresses and sustains the historical traditions of our culture.

Data Collection

Data has been collected through conversation, observation and reflection. The past three years have been devoted to learning about Thai social life through reading, traveling and conversations with Thais and those who frequent Thailand. Numerous smaller pilot research projects have been conducted on Thai and German social life throughout my doctoral studies, including creating adult learning models, historical analysis and art projects. The conversations included in this study were recorded over a two week period while visiting Bangkok in the Summer of 2005, where I became acquainted with members of the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce who introduced me to a wide social network of Germans and Thais who have different degrees of prolonged experience working with one another. Most of the conversations were conducted in English, with sporadic German spoken by both Thai and German participants. My German language proficiency allowed me to deepen and broaden many conversations to reach subtler nuance and self-disclosure among the participants. I believe speaking German was crucial to the success of the overall research project and especially in establishing contacts.

Text Creation

According to Herda (1999 127), there is more than one text created in field-based hermeneutic research. A variety of data has been accumulated on the topic at hand in the form of conversations, pictures, magazines and books. Additional informal data outside of conversations includes academic texts, journal articles, news articles, documentaries, films and informal conversations. Since participating in the research proposal, a wider variety of information on the subjects of Thai and German culture and history, international trade, ethics and business has been added to the reference list.

The conversations averaged an hour in length and were recorded and then transcribed into a text. The text has become the fixation of our conversations in writing (Herda 1999: 97). The transcriptions have been sent to the participants to be read, to add comments, and to clarify any points if necessary, as well as to provide feedback. Receiving the text allows the participant the opportunity to review and reflect on what has been said. The researcher has accommodated any changes the participants wish to make to the text. Those final drafts are included here.

In addition, because of the researcher's direct experience with the topic at hand, he was able to witness first-hand some of the organizational contexts that frames the communication in which participants work and make ethical decisions. The researcher has described, where appropriate, what he witnessed in the daily interactions of Thai and German people and has constructed what Geertz (1973: : 9) calls "thick description," where a detailed narrative is written to illustrate the patterns of social interaction between people that we can therefore draw meaning from. A copy of my journal is attached to this document as an appendix.

Introduction to Data Analysis And Pilot Study

Data analysis means reading the text provided by the research conversations in order to identify themes and categories that relate to the theoretical orientation or research categories. Themes emerge when multiple participants speak about similar experiences or when the conversations point to theories or data that relate to the topic at hand. The text is read multiple times in order for the author to enlarge his understanding of how Thais and Germans speak about and experience ethical decision making when working with one another. The reader's own experience and point of view engages and shapes the text to construct a narrative of the various themes that should be read like a cohesive story for subsequent readers.

The following data analysis is the result of a pilot study conducted during my doctoral coursework in anthropological fieldwork in preparation for this dissertation to initiate an exploration of ethical decision-making among Thai people. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the researcher's questions were adequate to guide a conversation and further analyze Thai ethical decision-making. The conversation was then transcribed into a text that was analyzed for meaning and relevant themes. The text analysis yielded three themes including: Thai socialization, parenting and education. The text was then further analyzed using Critical Hermeneutic theory to draw out deeper underlying interpretations of the data that were then used as the foundation of the dissertation.

Conversation Partner

Wissuta Mandel is a forty three-year-old instructional media teacher and doctoral student from Bangkok, Thailand who now resides in San Jose, California. I was introduced to Wissuta in the Writing Center at the University of San Francisco, where I was employed part-time as a writing tutor. She stands about five foot four inches tall, has dark olive skin, high cheek bones and wavy thick dark brown hair. She has a feminine but clear sounding voice with a heavy Thai accent and a reserved but friendly demeanor. She has lived in the United States for approximately eight years and is married to a retired American business executive. She hopes to graduate from USF with an advanced degree in instructional technology.

Ms. Wissuta grew up in Bangkok where her mother raised her as a single parent. She comes from a family with important social notoriety in Thai society. She has an advanced degree in Design from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, and she has worked as an interior designer in Bangkok with international clients. Since migrating to the United States, she has worked in restaurants, schools and businesses, in addition to learning about American business practices from her husband, who worked at a top high-tech firm in Silicon Valley, California.

For approximately one hour, we spoke about her youth in Thailand, her relationship with an American businessman, her migration to the United States and her adjustment to the American way of life. We discussed matters such as Thai social practices, Thai assumptions of life and Thai Buddhism. The following data analysis of this conversation yielded the following subject areas: 1) The influence of the Thai parenting, household and family, 2) The Thai educational system, 3) and How Thais are socialized.

Pilot Study Themes: Parenting Household and Family

Wassuta spoke of the family she grew up in and the work ethic that was instilled in her by her mother, who was a disciplined business woman. “My mom was born in the outskirts of Bangkok and then she moved in... she got her education at the teacher educational school. Her highest education was a high school certification, it was difficult with a small child like me for get better job, she had done many things, she is a very good cook.” Mulder (1997: 215) discusses the high reverence for the mother in Thai culture and how she is the center of Thai family life, embodying Thai ethical ideals. It was interesting to me how the larger social aspect of Thai traditions and community were dwarfed by Winnie’s relationship to her mother. She said, “So what I remember from my mom, my past life is, I woke up in the morning and mom is already awake to go and she will go to her little restaurant to work with her workers and she will be back late at night and even though she was at home, I always saw her do the accountant thing.” Winnie rarely ever mentioned other people or her community who were as influential in her development as her mother.

Education

Beyond her family, Winnie spoke of her education as the foremost influence on her identity and work ethic. However, rather than learning academic skills, she learned a way of life, what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the world, and something about how society is ordered. She explained, “It is forbidden to question. For example, in my generation we still have that problem, when I was a student it was not acceptable, to

raise your hand and interrupt your teacher, what is it? What is that? No, I do not understand, oh, you do not do that. What you do is listen, keep your mouth shut and believe, what we train the children in my generation or my mom's generation, I don't know today."

Winnie's educational experience seemed to be a source of great frustration for her. She was taught not to question authority, to accept unwaveringly the ideas espoused by the teacher and to accept the ideas of her superior. She thinks blind adherence to authority is a source of great trouble in Thai society that makes social change difficult and keeps people from improving their lives. She continued, "You know, when you are growing up and you are trained, to be a believer and not a questioner, what will become your future? You don't know how to question. When I come to this country, I don't know how to ask my teacher, it is just so difficult for me to raise my hand and ask questions." The deeply ingrained belief in the power of authority and an inability to question seems a continuing source of frustration for her.

Socialization

We discussed the Thai social system, how it is organized and where one is positioned. I asked her if Thai society was a hierarchy like I had read and if people are really incapable of transcending roles. She responded, "You know what, sometimes I think about our problem is our country used to have kings forever. And that kind of social system is you listen to the higher person tell you what to do, and you believe them, we used to be slaves, or, so Thai people from my generation or the previous generation we have problem to question things." She then discussed the cultural intersection of Buddhism and the remnants of the social controls instituted by the monarchy to impose

rigid cultural boundaries on the Thai people such as where to go, how to dress and when to speak. “So you listen and you do what people tell you to do, so if you understand the system of social monarchy system for a long time and Buddhist idealism and philosophy, you may understand Thai people, why they are still in trouble and why the Chinese people after the third generation they take over the Thai economy.”

The effects of the rigid hierarchical Thai social system have had profound lasting effects on how Winnie acts in organizational settings. She has experienced a clear difference between Thai organizations and Western organizations. She described a recent experience in an American organization. She said, “I am talking with you like this and one teacher may over-listen your conversation, and all of a sudden she throws her words in the conversation across the room, this shock me because in my country you do not talk to anybody unless you are addressed, and for quite sometime I don’t understand that case, she’s from Boston and that is the East Coast culture, to try to engage people in conversation, but if I don’t understand that point I think that teacher is rude. I don’t talk to you. Why do you over-listen my conversation?” She described how power, authority, conversation styles and social roles make her uncomfortable and are a source of confusion for her when in an American organization. The rigid hierarchical social system she experienced growing up is still a critical aspect of her individual social reality.

Results of Pilot Study

My conversation with Wassuta Mandel confirms that the Thai family continues to be the central focus of Thai life and ethical identity, as it reaches out across all aspects of everyday life. The family’s role in developing the Thai orientation toward ethics should be investigated further as it is the source of cultural and social patterns of belief.

Habermas continues, “As long as moral philosophy concerns itself with clarifying the everyday intuitions into which we are socialized, it must be able to adopt, at least virtually, the attitude of someone who participates in the communicative practice of everyday life.” (2002: 48). The interplay between the family, education and the Thai social system, and to what extent they interact or reinforce one another in the development of Thai ethics, is the reason for this larger dissertation research project.

Implications of the Pilot Study on the Current Research Subject

Little research has been done on ethical decision-making in Thailand or that includes the full participation of the Thai people. This pilot study illustrates how the surface and internal dimensions of Thai ethical life are vastly different. The pilot study confirms that the three main categories for further exploration including, Thai education, socialization and religion play a critical role in Thai identity formation and ethical considerations. Ignoring the Thai perspective in considering ethical acts in Thai society has serious social repercussions that can reinforce a repressive social system that has traditionally suppressed the voices of common people. Allowing full participation of Thai people in ethical decision-making can establish long-term organizational relationships, not to mention influence productivity and organizational success; but more importantly, foster openness throughout Thai society, in addition to promoting communication as the starting point to social change.

Chapter Six of the dissertation presents the data compiled over the course of a two week visit to Bangkok, Thailand, with German and Thai executives, Germans and Thais who work for the Thai-German chamber of Commerce, Germans who own small companies and businesses operating in Thailand, and Thais who work for the government

who are responsible for building and maintaining productive trade relations with Germany. Data is presented in the form of a narrative including characters, physical and spatial settings, events, dialogue and a plot, that speaks to the research categories including education and socialization, religion and ways of conducting business. The data will be interspersed with descriptions of the participants and their organizational roles as well as the context in which the conversations took place. Theory from the research perspective will also be interspersed with data to offer further insight and clarification of the participants' words.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Thais and Germans: Working Together?

On a bright and sticky early afternoon in Bangkok, Thailand, a group of Thai executives, politicians, civic leaders and trade specialists stand outside a train station on the outskirts of the city mingling quietly, smiling and shaking hands, as they await the arrival of Siemens executives. This is to be the inauguration of a new train line that will link greater Bangkok to its center, as well as a celebration of a joint venture between the government of Thailand and the Siemens Corporation. Siemens is a major global corporate presence in Thailand and has many public and private projects, which transfers technology, intellectual capital and hundreds of workers to Thailand each year.

Major Boonchuay, a Thai Air-Force advisor, stands in a crisp brown military uniform barely breaking a sweat. He worked in Germany for two years and received a degree from a German university, but now serves as a specialist for the government in Thai-German transfer of technology. Part of a select group of Thais, he studied in Germany as a young man on scholarship as part of a long-standing cultural exchange between the two nations that dates back to the 1860's. Major Boonchuay says, "The Thai system needs more than 30 years to be like the German system." He goes on to say that the Germans have the best production and commitment to quality. "But they don't understand the culture of the Thai people. They don't understand how we do things around here. We have all top major companies, but they need cultural interpreters so that the products can be marketed to the people."

The executives converged at the top of the subway's escalator to begin the tour of the subway, which when fully active, will eventually transport over 500,000 people a day and initiate economic development outside of Bangkok's financial corridor. However, there were no German executives to be found. Perhaps recognizing the lack of German presence, the major highlights the increasing technological and manufacturing presence of German companies in Thailand, but also their deficiencies. "The Thai people are a very open people. We accept everyone regardless of religion. We have an open mind. The Germans have a part of the population that don't think like we do. Those people we have to change." Many Germans are working in the upper echelons of Thai society, and have a significant influence on Thai culture. However, they are rarely seen socializing with Thais, even in a business setting such as this.

A few days earlier, in a massive glistening high-rise tower in Bangkok's financial corridor, two young German ladies who work for the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce discussed their experiences in Thailand. Andrea Wintermantel, a German lawyer working in Thailand explained why she came to Thailand to work. "We couldn't afford all of these things in Germany because it's much cheaper here. We can go to dinner, we can go to cinema and we don't have to think too much about things here, we don't have to do our laundry here and as a student we can afford those things here, and in Bangkok you can have anything you want." German society is known for its thrift and conservative social structure, where good jobs for young well educated women are increasingly rare. Working in Thailand offers the possibility to develop one's resume, and to live beyond one's means, at an affordable rate.

Working in Thailand for many of the young German executives seems less about participation and more about enhancing one's resume for employers back home, where competition for jobs is fierce. Asked if she has many Thai friends, Valerie Mosberg, another young German executive responded, "Well, not really friends, I mean we go out with the Chamber, but I can't say that we are really friends now, it takes a long time to get to know Thais and it takes months, and I can't really say that we are friends, unfortunately." She goes on to explain how working in Thailand is an opportunity to improve her English—not her Thai. Her cultural experience is a badge of honor that will make her more appealing to future German employers.

Germans working in Thailand are a subculture in themselves. They tend to get close to one another and often dine together, live together and attend social events together. There is an extensive social network of German executives, ex-patriots and long-term executives who maintain their cultural heritage, language and food. For instance, one night, a formal social gathering ensued on the roof of German executive housing, where mainly Germans and other Europeans drank beer, smoked, and listened to American pop songs from the 1980's. There was one Thai woman there. She had been educated in Germany and was dating a German man. However, there seems to be little thought as to how extensive or cohesive this network is, and if it is open to Thais in a way where they could be included in their conversations about Thailand.

Interacting with and observing others in face-to-face interaction is a valuable way in which to assess the social relationships of a community, even a global community. Clifford Geertz (1973: 141) says that looking at the behaviors of actual people in actual societies and in actual cultures is more valuable than abstract generalizations that add

little insight into how people actually live. By listening to the words and stories of German and Thai participants, we get a more concrete picture of their interconnected, or disconnected lives.

In the organizations observed for this study, the organizational structure was determined by Germans and Germans held most of the positions in management and leadership. Thais usually held a supporting role in technology or cultural translation, in cross-cultural negotiations or media relations. Germany is known to have a formal hierarchy based on seniority and expertise, where managers usually address one another by their last name (Nees 2000:53). However, the organizational hierarchy may be changing, says Asia-Pacific Conference officer and German participant Sebastian Doring, who thinks that German culture is becoming less hierarchical than Thais. "I think here it is more, in Germany that might have been loosened up a little bit, and it is always a question in which field you are working. And actually modern companies I think are actually pushing that, working without hierarchies."

Sebastian goes on to explain how he perceives a social hierarchy in Thailand that keeps Thais from being honest with superiors which causes problems in decision-making. He believes this is largely due to the ways foreigners are perceived and treated. "Here in Thailand, they have a really really hard time telling them something is not like, like the boss wants it to be. So that if a problem arises, they might just be afraid to tell it and just keep it like that and the boss will never know. And they have to check everything that has been done, he has to deal with that, and it is not that they don't know or they are doing it on purpose." Sebastian went on to explain how the German corporate value system rewards individual problem-solving, and bringing solutions to management is

seen as good for the company, while in Thailand, “no, don't say anything critical. Even if it is not against the boss but could be helpful.”

Sebastian's colleague Max Felker at the Thai-German Chamber of Commerce reiterates these observations. “If you approach a person who is older than you or who is working longer in the Chamber than you, actually is working in the Chamber a decade, and you always have to approach him very humbly.” Max said that there is certain way to approach a Thai person in a company that would be different from working with a German of the same position. He said he tries to be aware of the person he is working with, how old they are, and their seniority in the company, which reflects his level of interpersonal communication.

Germans seem to express a bit of unease around issues of hierarchy with Thais, who have a certain perception of Germans as *Farang*, or a pejorative Thai term for white Europeans. Ms. Laongsin Inpata or “Mint” is Thai, but educated in Germany, and has a different perspective of the Thai hierarchy, because most Thais aren't aware of her background and education. Being able to speak German and Thai fluently has put Mint in the often awkward position of perceiving both worlds from the same perspective. Her inter-cultural experience provides added respect from most Thais, but also added confusion. “So I see they respect for like, respect you, but not to you, do you remember, Max in the first day, and she someone asked that who has studied economy. Who is economist here, and that Max says, is economist, she was in Bonn, and the woman she said, no, I don't need Thai, do you remember? Do you remember? I don't need any Thai advisor. Oh that was funny, so they I don't know if they respect every Thai.” Mint sees

very clearly that how Thais view ethnicity, education and hierarchical roles plays a meaningful role in the ways Thais treat one another in organizational contexts.

Sebastian goes on to discuss other cultural norms he has perceived since working with Thais. “But I think the organizing, I think that was anyway the question, from the organizing of the company, so of course are very important here are that you suit the collective attitude of the Thais because they are not individual workers, but it is more collective. So you will find in many, we have in the kitchen there, where many of the Thai eat, they have lunch together, or in the morning when I come, I always have breakfast together in the office, we have a special breakfast for that. And we were accompanied by Directors, they go through our designers, they also have a, part of our office is like a community everywhere, wherever they have pizza together or whatever. So that is this collective attitude is very important.” Sebastian seems to relish the Thai perspective and its communal attitude toward work, which is very different from the German way. While on the surface, Sebastian enjoys the Thai friendliness and work attitude, he does suggest skepticism about its authenticity and purpose. “Thai amount of friendliness at all times, it is amazing, so like even if you approach them in the improper way they will just like not shout it to your face or something. It's superficial sometimes, so you can't see if that is all that it is into it, so you think it is all perfect, but we don't know what is going on.”

Some Germans are not as forgiving in their assessment of Thai attitudes toward work, as Daimler Chrysler's Marcus Volmer suggests. “It is going to be much different from your experience, I think the way Thais are educated is not very helpful to them to compete. I think they are educated to be compliant and to follow rules but not necessarily

to think individually.” However, Mr. Volmer was one of the few German participants to note language as a barrier to communication in the workplace. “Uh, more Germans than Thais, because it is just easier to get access to Germans, and not many Thais speak as good English, so it is a little easier to get Germans than Thais.” While English is neither culture’s primary language, it is far more common for Germans to speak proficient English than Thais, who have less formal education than their German counterparts, and less knowledge of English in particular, which provides a distinct workplace disadvantage.

Wolfgang Schneider echoes the comments of other Germans. He has been working with Thais for years manufacturing boilers using predominantly Thai workers in a Thai-based manufacturing center in Bangkok. And while he overwhelmingly enjoys his daily interactions with Thais, he finds some recurring problems. “The education system is a little bit different than in our countries, first of all, what we learn, we learn to think, we have to find our own ways to solve problems, they their schools, and universities, they learn recipes, this is the problem and this is how you solve it, and then when there is a problem again they cannot solve it, when there is any deviation, it is over, they cannot solve it. It is a big problem, but this is very well recognized here by government.”

Wolfgang seems frustrated by the inability of Thais to take initiative and to problem solve in the German way. “And okay you have to be aware of it is one thing, and the other thing, productivity is lower 25% of what we are used to in Germany, which means that well you only see how much a worker owns in an hour in a day, you cannot compare here but you have to take it at least four times to be on the same comparison level in Germany and the US.” So while education and training in Wolfgang’s opinion is a

recurring problem which leads to lower productivity, the lower cost of operating in Thailand allows him to be competitive in a fierce market and to remain profitable.

Mr. James Brunner, a developer and hotel owner on the island of Koh Chang, also experiences how Thais have a different perspective of work than his German expectations. “Many of them are not reliable. What they speak about and what they do are two different things. They never learn things to do for work. If they not like something they change the work. They always changing the work.” Mr. Brunner has spent years learning what it takes to motivate and retain quality Thai workers. “You must have a personal relationship with them. The personal relationship things they have to feel good about that they work for. They work for less money if they don’t like you. If they don’t like you they leave. I speak Thai but not good. When I start to work my Thai was not so good. The people who work with me know my language is very different and they put up with me. I quite a lot of people who work with my bad Thai. I speak three languages and Thai is the worst one.” You can often see Mr. Brunner running around the grounds of his development site barking out orders in Thai, but also playing with children, laughing heartily and smoking cigarettes with the locals. It seems that the Thais respect his German discipline, but are loyal to his jovial communication style and camaraderie.

“What motivates Thais? They are motivated by feeling good. The heart must feel good. They have to feel comfortable that they do well for you. They are motivated if they feel comfortable with the boss or working environment. They stop to work if they don’t feel happy. It make them unhappy if you must use the right language if the light not work right say “Sorry, this light not work” in a nice language.” As Mr. Brunner speaks, he

squints his eyes seriously, as if reflecting on particular times when he rubbed a Thai person the wrong way, or acted in a decisively German way that ended up backfiring. “The way we speak can block up their work. Normally, they like you to speak nice with them. However, sometimes you have to tell them again and again to get an ashtray. Many of them not have a work ethic and this is not correct. They don’t have a work ethic.”

Mr. Brunner finds a lot of joy working with Thais and perhaps has been influenced more by them than he would like to admit. “I work a long time with Thai people and sometimes it is busy and they can be very busy. The Thai people are one of the best if you treat them right. If you know how to treat them then they work good. For me is my staff work with me a long time. The staff sees my private problems, sometimes is like a big family. They very young people in the beginning I get angry for this or that, something is not right so I don’t get angry anymore and I don’t know, I have become more Thai.” It is interesting to note the reference made here between public and private self, a very German concept, which will be explored more deeply later on. However, Mr. Brunner’s success with Thai workers could be associated with the elimination of that separation. He thinks a more open and honest style of communication is needed when working with Thais.

Thais and German Social Interaction

The German Embassy in Bangkok sits a few blocks away from the financial corridor on sprawling grounds surrounded by lush gardens. It is an active scene as Thais line up to attain a select few German visas to leave Thailand for a different life. Young armed German guards line blockades, and the scene is more reminiscent of Checkpoint Charley than a Thai street. Inside one of the large Romanesque marble and stone

buildings is Frau Pagaval Ratanpairoj, advisor to the economic department of the German Embassy. She is a slender and quiet woman who is barely audible, despite the relative quiet and anonymity of the surroundings.

Pagaval Ratpanpairoj has participated and observed the ways Germans work with Thais. She has advanced in the German bureaucracy because she can speak both German and English, and because she has had a strong educational experience, but also sees that it is more difficult for Thais to advance. Frau Pagaval studied in Germany for fourteen years in Bayern, Bavaria, and began working for the German Embassy in the economics department. She speaks German fluently. She says that she began her career as a teacher and characterizes herself as a student of cultural exchange with strong political opinions. Her occupation is to promote business between Thailand and Germany. “The German executives don't trust the Thais to be leaders and they don't give them the opportunity. Management, especially management in engineering, management there are many, many Thais in this area, engineering management, but in German companies management or in high level, it is none Thai people at the high level.” She is worried about how Thais are treated in German companies and if they will ever have higher positions of executive leadership.

“In this matter I don't feel so positive about the opportunity to go ahead with German companies, I think we can work with German companies but in the labor not in the management labor. German people have they think that Thai people can't work professional.” Frau Pagaval has observed that Germans often put Thais in less powerful roles without any basis and use Thais to gain entrée to the Thai market but don't really reward them with leadership positions. “Management, especially management in

engineering management there are many, many Thais in this area, engineering management but in management or in high level it is none Thai people at the level, at the high level.”

“I think that there is prejudice by Germans against Thais. It seems to me that the Germans have more a logical, scientific point of view and Thais are more of an emotional, relational people. And that these are two different styles of working and maybe the Germans interpret that the wrong way or they don't understand.” Frau Pagaval seems hesitant to speak critically of the Germans because she is essentially working for them in a high government capacity. “It's a big character for German people, this character can not lead to success. I don't think so, we can mix the good side of the German character, the scientific and rational side of German character, and emotional side of the Thai people, when they accept that this character can both, can have success in business.”

Frau Sirirat Sukarapak is a social magnet who works independently with international executives from Germany transitioning to Thai life. Her business is based on her extensive Thai social network and international experience. She too was educated in Germany and speaks fluent German. Frau Sukarapak has thick brown hair and a wide smile that highlights her pudgy cheeks. Her friendliness and confidence makes her seem trustworthy and experienced. As an independent contractor, she works with German executives independently, mainly through personal references.

Most of what Frau Sukarapak says about the Germans is positive, having been educated in Germany. However, she acknowledges that a lack of understanding of Thai culture keeps German businesses from being more successful in the Thai market. She

contrasted Thai to German advertisements as an example. “The Thai they have more concentrate on the movie stars or soap stars in Thailand, in Thailand the people must be proper people and they must be long term, and the advertisements for Thai products something the Thai people are shy they like but if you look at the Thai Website, the bling! The bling! Everywhere the German website is clear. It’s a difference of the culture, because the Thai people are different, they emotional, but Germans are logic and clear.” Frau Sirirat highlights the emotional side of Thais as essential to understanding what motivates them as workers and consumers, which is in contrast to German efficiency and logic. “In Thailand first you must have the heart of your customer and then you can get anything from them. If you expensive or your product not good like another product but they will buy something from you even if it is more expensive because they have a good feeling from you. People spend money and don’t necessarily think about it.”

Watchara Rujiroatpipatana is one of the few Thais working at the Thai-German Chamber of Commerce who has not studied in Germany, nor does he speak German. He has worked his way up through the ranks of the organization and thus has had a chance to interact with multiple levels of German hierarchy, both organizationally and personally. He is a fresh faced young man with a boyish charm who likes to be referred to as “Tom.” Like many Thais, he did not readily disclose his comments and opinions about Germans, but gradually revealed some observations about working with Germans when he felt more comfortable. “There is not much work here. They just answer E-mails of what the German people want and then I pass it along to the department. People just learn from the culture. What we are thinking and working style, sometimes they are confused by what Thai people are working like that, like a fight until the end, they are working like do it

quickly but not finishing it, just try to finish that, they don't know why we don't do it faster until the end." Tom's eventual frustration surfaces about how Germans differ in their orientation toward work and their expectations from Thais.

Tom is particularly bothered by the lack of team-work and group orientation of Germans. "Not the big teamwork. They are just working in their departments and when they have a problem they just ask us. They say ask us for help but not how we can help you? In our department it's just Tom and us and when we have a project together, the boss says, you do this, you do this, you do this, but we don't work together." Tom often feels slighted by Germans who rely on him for cultural knowledge but they don't seem compelled to know more about him personally. He thinks their isolation hinders their work and is not very Thai. "If you are a manager then they will believe you. It depends on how long you are working here boss a bit clear of you, because you are like a senior of the office because you are more experienced than someone that is new in the office. But in Thailand, Thais are always apart from the internationals."

Sirigul Sakonthangal is the Chief Public Relations officer for the Thai-German Chamber of Commerce and knows about every public event, product and person associated with German investment in Thailand. She is a small but robust woman with thick black hair, pudgy cheeks and a delightful smile. Educated in Germany for many years, she has strong opinions about German-Thai relations from both sides. "The quality of people is different between Germans at home and Germans here. When a German comes they are automatically lifted in the hierarchy. They feel they are the best status. And they change. They take advantage of their status. The way they treat the Thai, they lose their social value of their humanity."

Ms. Sakornattagul has mixed feelings about Germans in the workplace, partly due to her experience and education in Germany, which has allowed her to live a successful life in Thailand. She recognizes the strength of the German educational system, but also thinks Germans act and behave differently in Thailand. "I observe that most Germans socialize with Germans and Thais with Thais." A common criticism of Germans is that they tend to stay within their own social circle and don't really socialize with Thais inside or outside of work. "Germans are more focused on themselves and their orientation of thinking is different. We are socialized differently. We are more group-oriented. We have a lot of self confidence but are confused." She explains that Germans take advantage of their higher social status in Thai society, which she says, makes it difficult to work with them. She said Thais are often not included in key decision-making and that "Germans like to observe regions and make strategies but to not solve problems such as globalization." This coincides with the previous conversation with Markus Volmer, the German executive with Daimler-Chrysler, who makes decisions based on abstract data and little direct experience with Thai culture.

Sirigul is also aware of why many Germans come here and questions the motivation of many German executives. "Most are willing to come here to manage and most don't want to return because life is better here. They have housekeeping and a driver. We don't get the same resources even though we do the same work. Most foreign managers are less qualified than managers at home." She also sees a disparity between how Thai executives are treated when compared to their German counterparts.

Germans have much more experience in corporate dynamics, having a market-based economy themselves, which seems more conducive to German values than Thai. A

global culture is developing in Thailand but it is still a developing economy in many respects, where the remnants of rural values clash with western ideals of capitalism. Habermas (1998: 41) says, "The mode of village life, which had been formative for all cultures from the Neolithic period until well into the nineteenth century, survives only in imitation form in developed countries. The decline of the peasantry has also revolutionized the traditional relationship between the urban and rural. Today, more than 40 percent of the world's population lives in cities." Thais have a difficult time with many of the underlying values of global economics which Germans represent, namely, efficiency, linearity, and power. Participating in corporate life is new for many Thais where tradition, history and social relations are one's motivation and not year-end reports or enticements. As the values of urban life begin to take hold, is it possible that it may not be long before Thais exhibit the efficient organizational behaviors of their German counterparts?

Conclusions

The background of this study argues that because Thais and Germans have different cultural, historical, geographical and linguistic experiences that this would cause misunderstandings in the workplace. The data reveals that while communication between Thais and Germans cannot be characterized as anything resembling conflict, argumentative or even sustained tensions, they do, however, see themselves, their work and their worlds starkly different from one another. Germans perceive Thais as more group-oriented and friendly but that they have difficulty managing new tasks and tend to shy away from conflict or criticism. Because Thais are concerned with maintaining face and the social hierarchy, Germans perceive them as less honest and truthful in daily work

activities, which creates a barrier to trust. Thais perceive Germans as overly logical, precise and detail-oriented but also more individualistic and private. They also perceive Germans as unknowledgeable about Thai life and sometimes insensitive to their work and social needs.

Ricoeur (1984: 58) states that, “Before being a text, symbolic mediation has a texture. To understand a ritual act is to situate it within a cultic system, and by degrees within the whole set of conventions, beliefs and institutions that make up the symbolic framework of culture.” The words of these select Thai and German participants have been put into a text which points to the context of meaning created in their inter-subjective worlds. In other words, we can interpret the many ways what their words say about how they perceive one another and their work. This is what Ricoeur (1984: 58) calls “symbolic mediation,” which are rules for behavior that assert values, customs and regulations. By comparing and contrasting Thai to German actions in light of one another’s cultural traditions, we can better see their ethical perspectives.

We will now explore more deeply how Germans and Thais are socialized, educated and how their religious practices may influence how they work, but more importantly, how they pertain to the ethical orientations of Thai and German participants. By exploring these topics, we can clarify why Thais and Germans behave the ways they do, and learn how their social culture influences the ways they perceive themselves and one another in order to come closer to recognizing their mutual orientation to ethical decisions.

German Social Values

Wolfgang Schneider is a small business owner who moved his manufacturing facility to Thailand in 1982 in order to stay with his German competitors. He is a young looking man in his early 60's with silver hair, angular features and strong personal charm. On this particular night he was seated in the back room of Otto's, Sukhumvit Soi 1, Thailand's most famous and best German restaurant, awaiting Thais and Germans for his monthly Thai-German small business meeting. Because of Germany's high cost of living, expensive social contract, aging population and cost of unification, it relies more on outsourcing manufacturing to other shores such as Thailand in order to compete in the global marketplace. However, this is nothing new, as Germany and Thailand have acted as trading partners since the 1860's.

"Between the city of Hamburg and Thailand so were the first relations, but it is very easy to understand because it was for trading. And Hamburg was the port. And all the big trading companies they had offices in Hamburg. And this, the city of Hamburg and Thailand were the first relations. Right in the 1860's or 70's or so." Wolfgang mixes personal and cultural history together with enthusiasm and expresses a love for Thailand. "I said, my goodness, everybody I know, all my competitors from Germany, and all the other countries, from the US, they are all advertising here, there must be a market, so that was my first idea, yea, but this is only the first step to realize that there is a market, now how to approach this market, as a small company we are, we were, we still are in west Berlin, surrounded in the middle of the west surrounded by walls, how to approach that." Working in Thailand allows him to maintain the German commitment to quality while reducing costs.

In his book *Germany: Unraveling an Enigma*, Greg Nees (2000: 38) explains how Germans expect a sense of “ordnung” or social conduct, which governs life by explicit rules and regulations. Germans see ordnung as a means of maintaining the common good and acts as a social contract that makes for a cohesive cultural experience. However, these detailed social norms can often seem constrictive to outsiders. For Germans, a lack of social knowledge, or ordnung, is a source of continuous frustration.

Nees (2000) emphasizes the strong work ethic Germans possess and their commitment to quality. “This basic cultural trait is reinforced in the apprenticeship system, which in turn makes “Made in Germany” synonymous with quality” (Nees: 114). As stated in the background of the countries, Germany’s commitment to quality arises from its ancient guild system and an integrated apprentice system that links vocational schools with German companies, which increases labor costs but creates highly skilled and confident workers. Wolfgang continues, “We closed down our production in Germany and made a commitment to an agreement here with a Thai company, together with them with financial and we rented a factory here and expanded, and moved all the machinery from Germany to here and started our production here, and thus far, I would say is the best decision we ever have made”

Wolfgang maintains his commitment to German quality by relying on German engineers, but the labor is all Thai. “The German-Thai Trade relationship is I can trace it back to 1881, I am the fourth generation, my sons in Germany are the fifth generation, it was the best decision we ever made, it's how to say, a little bit sad, that we've lost a lot of jobs in Germany of course, but if we would not have done it we would have been bankrupt now. So we at least we have all the engineering capacities in Germany, and all

the equipment are bought in Germany and the raw materials are bought in Germany, still some are there, but the handwork the rolling and cutting and so on is made here.” He says that the Thais don’t possess the engineering capacities of Germans, but that Thai manufacturing laborers are often better than German workers.

In addition to developing his business processes, Wolfgang has also developed a personal relationship with a Thai business partner who has changed his perceptions of Thais and allowed him insight into Thai social life. “I have learned to be patient, I have learned from him not to be a Western liberator, or be straight forward, I have learned from him to be calm, slow down, and always when I’m...yesterday, yesterday we just had a discussion, or a conversation or a discussion, and I was very excited, I was angry about some things and he said to me, Wolfgang, calm down, calm down, you are not a senior citizen, calm down. That is very important to Thai’s isn’t it, and I think that is one of the good things about working with Thais is that they take pleasure in daily life, and that they try to reduce tension.”

While enjoying his daily experiences with Thais, he is also frustrated at what he perceives as the lack of personal commitment that some Thais have to their work and how difficult it can be to manage or correct them. “The next thing is, one of the most important is here, not to lose face, in Germany or in America as well when there is a problem and you have a meeting and he is responsible and you can call him in the group, you can never do it in Thailand, when you know that he has made a mistake, you have to take him separately under four eyes and tell him, otherwise he would lose face and this is the most traumatic thing which could happen to him.” While explaining the complex and sensitive nature of “saving face,” Wolfgang doesn’t express the underlying social reasons

for this behavior or what purpose it serves in preserving Thai tradition. Losing face is an obstacle contrary to the straight-forward explicit style that Germans expect.

Continuing his dissection of Thai culture, Wolfgang's assessment of knowledge transfer to Thailand implicitly reveals his own German cultural values, namely that the German commitment to quality is unapproachable, and that Thais are unable to produce something of similar quality on their own. Wolfgang believes, that Thais have some innate inability to do for themselves. "As this part of the quality would remain, even if I would leave, but what would not remain is, the quality is two things, the workmanship, and the engineering that makes the product. But what would not remain is the engineering, this would be gone. They could copy the same boiler again and again and again and again, but when a new problem comes, a new type of fuel, they don't know what to do. Okay now I say something that is very naughty, we are happy about that, because if they would know how to do it, they would not need us." In speaking of Thais, Wolfgang asserts his own German cultural superiority and perception of excellence, while Thais are seen as subordinate or intellectually underdeveloped compared to Germans.

Max is a hyperactive, naturally humorous and gregarious young German who works at the Thai-German Chamber of Commerce. He has short rippled brown hair, a pointy nose and dark pinpoint eyes. He is very direct in his communication but very self-aware. Max seems continually confused by the social hierarchy of Thais. "I don't have any problem because of my company you know, but also with the Thai people, because it is difficult to work with them. So I know that my culture is a very difficulty, so if

someone older than you is the chief then you have to have respect of this person, so you have to be careful of how you talk or of how you say something, and you have to first check this, if you are saying something wrong.”

Max goes on to say that because of Thai social hierarchy that it is difficult to get accurate information because Thais fear upsetting the social balance and don't wish to discredit their superiors. “I don't think so that they don't want to bring the trouble to the boss, but I think they don't maybe, you know they don't know how to talk to them. And they don't know how to explain, I don't know...Is it not something that is part of Thai society, that children are taught not to question authority, children are taught not to sort of make trouble, and therefore maybe that carries over into the workplace.” Max is unclear of what the motivation of Thais might be for withholding information, if it has something to do with the workplace or a larger cultural value dealing with authority.

Valerie Mosberg, an economist who also works with the Thai-German Chamber of Commerce, makes some sharp distinctions between working with Germans and Thais. “In Germany you go there, you have your goals and there is a way of doing things, and there is a real concern for high quality and that's just not working here, because in Thailand you really have to get to know them, relationships are very important, you have to talk to them and get to know them before you get things done. It's not like we do it this way and just get it done.” Valerie has directly experienced opposing viewpoints to work. “I think it's frustrating to both parties, because Thais are saying that he's weird, too pushy. And I don't know anything about him so why should I do it? And the German is like, well they can't do anything here.”

Not far away from Valerie's office, in another glistening high-rise tower a half block away sits Markus Volmer, an engineer who works for Daimler-Chrysler's industrial division managing labor efficiency for the production of new vehicles made in Thailand. Markus' office is spartan, with no art, images or personality reflecting Thai or German culture or the people who work for Daimler Chrysler. A line of computer terminals lines a wall as young German executives scan computer screens that monitor production at Daimler Chrysler's local manufacturing plant. Markus describes his work abstractly, as if he is playing a video game, "It is planning, thinking for the future, thinking of processes, thinking of ways of doing something." His work seems completely detached from Thai culture and its people. He explains how he does his work. "Economic data, data on companies, data, well I don't know if you can call it data, but announcements for the government of what will achieve in Thailand, becoming the Detroit of Asia, and stuff like that, so we rely on that."

Although Markus' work is crucial to the lives of many Thais and perhaps influences how a car will be produced and in what ways, his decision-making does not involve actual interaction with Thais. "Um, usually I am getting information from the internet or from periodicals, from we are talking to people, from service, not only service by handy, but also by service that you can get somehow. And that provides pretty good material and numbers figures trends, strategies, facts, but getting information about culture, the social picture, it is much more difficult. Because there are not, periodicals, texts, lying around here, so it would take many more efforts to get them. You could look it up on the Internet, sure, but I haven't done that to be honest." Rather than trying to figure out just who Thais are, how they work, and if they have any ideas about how they

can make production more efficient, Markus and his colleagues operate according to texts and abstract data.

Thai Social Values

Ms. Laongsin Inpata, otherwise known as “Mint,” is a 31 year old coordinator of Asia-Pacific commerce at the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce. Mint was educated in Germany, and speaks German fluently, but was reared in Nan, Thailand, by a doctor and professor. She attempts to explain the reasons for the ways Thais might behave in the work-place. She attributes much of Thai behavior to its entrenched social hierarchy and history of authoritarian absolutism. “On the one hand they obey very much the authority, on the other they, want to be in harmony so they join together and they don't, like want to stay as the individual, and like I will go this place to eat and he will go there, and so also the loyalty to somebody like for them the Chamber, the personification of the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce, their loyalty is very big. So if the director says something--that is law. And they would never, yeah they would never try to tell him, no, we don't think that it is good idea.”

Mint goes on to explain how Thai people still carry their agrarian traditions of socialization from their rural history, which has not yet been discarded for what might be considered more progressive western practices. For instance, one's position within the family is still a central part of Thai consciousness. “I think that one of the biggest aims with, with a Thai girl or with a Thai woman is to have money and with that money her first aim is to secure the well being of her parents. The first thing if a Thai people get money, they want to make sure that their parents have a house where they can grow old.” Thus what Germans perceive as inhibiting worker relations, namely respect for authority

and preserving the social hierarchy, are in fact critical to maintaining Thai social life.

Thais don't possess a social history of social mobility that westerners take for granted as part of contemporary life. Thai society goes so far as to teach against it.

Siririt Sukarapak acknowledges that Thais have a more complicated social work ethic that is not easily recognizable to Germans, and which tends to frustrate them. "I know this is the most German people don't like it because everything the Thai do is not they keep the mask and everything is inside they don't speak, and this is very difficult for the Thai people." Sirirat goes on to explain how Germans express a desire for Thais to be more expressive in their actions, but that they don't always mean what they say either. "It is about our culture because in our culture we are taught that no matter what happens, we must remain friendly, and why the German people don't like it is because they want to know what we think not what we do. And when the Thais make a mistake, the German people get so angry!" Sirirat says there is a contradiction in the expectations of Germans, who prefer the compliant friendly attitude of Thais to the more critical point of view that they espouse in German society. She believes that Germans operate in Thailand specifically because of the Thai attitude toward work.

Perhaps more than any other Thai participant, Watchara Rujiroatpipatana, or "Tom", of the Thai-German Chamber of Commerce technology division participates with more Germans on a daily basis than any other person, and sees how they work differently from Thais. "They are working very individually, and they have good ideas, like, last time I worked with the project GTS doing like catalogue and media things and another just manage events or calling to people in Germany and they teach me when you have to concentrate on and don't be afraid to talk to the people, but normally they do it

individually, and working here for quite a long time is a very individual thing.” Tom says he tries to socialize with Germans when there is an opportunity but that those moments are few, and has learned that Germans are rather insular and private about themselves.

“They don’t understand sometimes about why Thais are always smiling. Why are they laughing or smiling. It’s the generality of it like smiling, laughing all the time.” Tom explains that Thais are always socializing in the office, chatting while they work and eating together, which he thinks makes Germans uncomfortable. “Sometimes they ask me why are you always eating in the office? Sometimes we skip that, because it’s not good to eat in office, um, they don’t understand why Thai people and about woman, why we can’t touch woman? Because we are a different culture, it is not like a European country where they can touch they can hug, they can do whatever. They have to be carefully like that because we are shy to do like that.” Tom says that work is like play, but more of a play on words, and that it means that he has to enjoy daily interactions of those he works with and that he doesn’t feel motivated by those that he cannot get along with.

Conclusions

In this brief summary of data, the conversation participants have attempted to describe in language their perceptions of their social practices, as well as the other’s, in hopes of revealing acts of socialization. In doing so, they reveal their own perceptions, cultural values and point of view. Ricouer (1981: 134) says, “This articulation is the core of the whole hermeneutical problem. Just as language, by being actualized in discourse, surpasses itself as system and realizes itself as event, so too discourse, by entering the process of understanding, surpasses itself as event and becomes meaning.” The act of discourse has allowed us to see how Germans and Thais perceive one another and

therefore gain insight into the meaning of their own cultural viewpoints. Ricoeur (1981: 137) continues, “To grasp a work as an event is to grasp the relation between the situation and the project in the process of restructuration.” What constitutes their viewpoints is constrained by the language they use, in this case English, but can nonetheless point to implicit, or taken-for-granted, acts of socialization and cultural values

Germans are socialized to perceive their lives as contingent upon norms which expect orderliness, quality and a high-level of individual commitment. However, Germans may also be unaware of how these social values may inhibit sharing, learning and concern for the social hierarchy in Thai society. On the contrary, Thais perceive the preservation of the social hierarchy as necessary for social harmony and recognizing one’s appropriate place in the social culture. However, this commitment to hierarchy may also preserve social harmony at the expense of individual liberty, development and perhaps happiness. Things aren’t always what they appear in Thai society and the mask of preserving the social hierarchy may also hide personal struggles for self-actualization. Another important aspect of socialization is played by the Thai and German educational systems, which conditions students through its curriculum to conduct themselves in certain socially acceptable ways, which will be explored now.

Education

The Thai Perspective of Education

Frau Pagaval Ratpanpairoj of the German Embassy is trained in linguistics and has acted as a German secondary level teacher in Thailand prior to becoming an economic advisor. Because she was also educated in Germany, she has a grasp of the

cultural differences regarding education. “The German people here learn to accept that in the Thai society, learn to understand how we think and how we do that. And we must learn to think, the German people to think to cut emotion, to think on the subject then we can work together.” She expresses a high regard for the German focus on critical thinking, but also finds fault. “I have concept that at the university in Germany, we have to expect our own thinking, therefore I cannot see the difference at the university, I think at the school there is different from learn method. Yeah, I think the Germans is one way to teach students to think critical. Learn to think critical and I try to support we can say this opinion, but unfortunately my son had told me his teacher (in Thailand) sometimes cannot allow him to say freely, to criticize something. The system and the curriculum is so bad that the idea of the teacher or the way of teaching is not modern, it is not accept.”

Mulder (2003: 18) explains how the Thai system of education is based on traditional authoritarian values that preserve the political and religious state as the center of Thai life to the point of eliminating individual autonomy. “Elementary school children have to demonstrate respect physically, in speech, in matters of opinion, for the rules, and for the rights of others. In speaking, people must use pleasing and polite words, refrain from gossip and lying; they should listen attentively to their teacher, not interrupt others and carefully consider their opinions; they must be very serious in following the rules” (Mulder 2003: 18). While this style of education may have been suitable for a cohesive agrarian style society in order to preserve tradition, Mulder (2003) goes on to state how this mode of education has not contributed to a smooth transition to a western style capitalistic society.

It could be argued that education has perhaps, to some degree, allowed Germans to more precisely, efficiently and purposely manage, control and dominate Thais. Mulder (2003: 62) explains, "The dynamics of economy, society, and culture have influenced the Thai style of life. It seems as if the old morality and good manners have been abandoned, while new values have taken their place. Protest has been sounded that the heartfelt of the past have been substituted by 'imported' materialism, which in its turn induces changes in behavior among the young." It cannot be dismissed that global companies such as Germany's Daimler Chrysler alter the Thai way of life, not only by the products that they create, but also the values and knowledge that influence Thais in organizational and social life. As Sebastian said, it is not just any knowledge, but a certain type of knowledge that is rewarded by Germans. Unfortunately, it is not an inherently Thai knowledge that is rewarded, but one that supports the values to succeed in global, corporate contexts.

Frau Pagaval goes on to discuss just what Thais are learning in their classrooms and how this supports the dominant social structure, namely economic expansion and respect for social hierarchy. "The new way of thinking, I think to the student think with analysis and to be leaders, to think in the leadership position. I think the authority of the teacher is so dominate that students cannot work independent, can not think independent." She sees reform of the Thai educational system as critical to the future of Thailand and a more equitable economic development. "I think education first, we have to education our people to bring more Ich kann nur sagen, zum bespiel the government try to push free trade is good for our economy, and many poor people believe this way of the government and but if the people could be good independent, they can think there are

disadvantages. That the people can think on both sides. And that we be better when the people not to be simple to manipulate.”

German-Thai Chamber of Commerce public relations manager Sirigul Sakornattanagul concurs with Frau Pagaval about the inadequacies of the Thai educational system and how it is hurting economic development. “It is difficult with Thai society. We are not together. We not trained in scholar, and they are not competitive. They don’t have experience working in groups like I have in Germany. I think the quantity and quality of education is good—if you can get it. If you are part of the upper group then you get good education if your parents are wealthy. I went to school with a boy who went to school hungry every day and he couldn’t learn. He was poor. You may not be able to take advantage of it because you are hungry. The chance of getting education is not normal because you are poor.” She explained that in addition to the lack of accessibility of quality educational services in Thailand, the general abject conditions in which many young Thai people live makes receiving an education challenging.

Mint was educated in both Germany and Thailand, and she too can compare the social and cultural values of both educational systems. “I loved the German system really because you know, you can do by your own, but that is the only thing different, the main point from Thailand, from the schools here, but to then in your schools to show your opinion you have to be, you know you have to subtly listen, but it is not in German way, when you think something, you have to talk, you have to explain what do you want, how do you understand, it is not in Thailand.” Mint describes a Thai educational system that teaches its students to obey, memorize and duplicate. “I think the way that both children are educated in the different cultures, really carries on in their later life, in that

German taught that to be, you know critical thinking, argumentation, not in a negative way, but having an argument about something is good, it is a way of expressing your feelings, being productive, and I think that is generally seen as negative in Thai society, that it is not good to have an argument, not good to disagree.” Mint explains that Thais are socialized through the educational system that to think independently of others and to exhibit competitiveness is a way of expressing a lack of harmony with your peers.

Tom offers criticism of Germans who he thinks are often not well prepared to do their work, but more importantly have misperceptions of Thai culture which hurts their relationships with Thais. “When you are coming here they have to know why we are working and what we are working for, need to learn to us that we learn as individuals and then we do not teach them anymore. People just learn from the culture. What we are thinking and working style, sometimes they are confused by what Thai people are working like that, like a fight until the end, they are working like do it quickly but not finishing it, just try to finish that, they don’t know why we don’t do it faster until the end.”

Tom says that Thais have a different perspective of the work day and time, and that Thais don’t find it necessary to spend eight hours in the office doing what they feel they can complete in four. Tom says that the German organizational system rewards Germans over Thais and that they are often relegated to less important duties. “German when they are working, they make groups like a German teams, and for Thai people they just support the teams. Because we work in the international style and all of the work is in English, we need someone to speak English also, and that’s why they hire German people, to working for the big project. But for the Thai we are just working as a support

and just working as part of the project.” Again the use of language has come up a means to gain power and authority with Germans. A lack of English proficiency limits how Thais can participate in German companies.

The German Perspective of Education

When asked about his educational experiences in Germany, Markus Volmer of Daimler Chrysler didn't go into much detail, as if the credibility of German education should not be questioned. German knowledge is perceived as something that must be preserved from being lost to other countries. “Um, what has been moved out of Germany is for example, textile industry and all other very intensive industries, just because it is very expensive in Germany. And the next wave, now going on already for ten years or something, is moving out higher value work, like assembling machines, cars, and the next wave would be moving out development work which is also ongoing. Moving programming tasks to India for example, and if you continue that, ya, this philosophy is moved out more and more.” There is no mention here of just what Germany gains in the transfer of knowledge to Thailand and other developing nations like it. It is as if the Thais have little to add to the German system. “The education system here has a lot of problems I think. Yeah, I am not into it too much. It is going to be much different from your experience, I think the way Thais are educated is not very helpful to them to compete. I think they are educated to be compliant and to follow rules but not necessarily to think individually.”

Thai-German Chamber of Commerce officer Sebastian Doring discussed the construction of a promotional booth at a recent German-Thai convention which highlights the German perception of education and its influence on the social ethic of

quality. “And if we send some information, it should be the right information and should be exact, no typing errors that sort of things, because they lose a lot of their faith.

Germans for example, design of the Sponsor booth, sponsors and they have booths where they can present their merchandise, I don't know videos or whatever, if I sent them to, these booths have to be perfect.” This highlights the German values of accuracy, efficiency and quality inherent in any professional transaction. However, nothing is mentioned about cultural relevancy, appropriateness or relationships between producer and customer. Again, there seems to be a perception that the German way is the right way, the best way, and that Thais offer little toward the development of their products or services.

Conclusion

Much has been written about the German educational system as being one of the finest in the world, continuously lauded by educators and business people alike for teaching fundamental skills, promoting academic rigor and preserving a cohesive cultural commitment to quality. However, the German educational system also carries within it certain cultural values conducive to the western business model of capitalistic commerce, namely a focus on science, rational thought and linearity. Nees (2000: 41) says, “Perhaps the most obvious vestige of the old class society is the German school system, and here too, Ordnung plays its part in the rigid tracking of students.” Neese (42) goes on to explain that the German system espouses the importance of social status, hierarchy and social roles and that employers will not even consider a candidate without the “right” education.

Thailand, on the other hand, is often criticized for not having a progressive school curriculum but one that is more interested in graduating students who lack fundamental skills and a more individualistic view of life in favor of supporting traditional social values and social hierarchy. Mulder (1997) has done an extensive analysis of the Thai national school system and describes the role of Thai education in socializing young people to traditional norms. "A wider social environment is offered by the school itself. If moral ways of the inner core of life lead to the family's wholesomeness, the moral ways of the school lead to discipline, because a place where many people mingle together needs order" (Mulder 1997: 35). Sulak Sivaraksa (2002: 35) says that this form of moral education is actually a remnant of Thai tradition to preserve its cultural values in the face of intrusive western influences. She says, "We blindly admired the West for the wrong reasons without realizing the dangers, and the West included Japan and all material progress and advanced technology. A consumer culture bringing Coca-Cola, fast food and blue jeans has replaced our local Siamese way of life" (2002: 35). Thai people are a product of the social system and the school is a central ingredient in preserving hierarchical, traditional and moral values in the face of the increasing dominance of global corporate values.

In order to more deeply assess the values, traditions and beliefs that inform ethical decision-making in transnational corporations which is altering Thailand's participation in the global economy, we must also investigate the place of religion on Thai and German society. As we shall see, by comparing the German and Thai view of religion, we see not only different perspectives of religion itself, but its place in public

and private life, which has profound influence on the ways Thais and Germans participate, solve problems and manage ethical dilemmas in an organizational setting.

Religion: Thai Buddhism and Consumerism

On the island of Koh Chang, five hours south of Bangkok and a one hour boat trip off of the southern peninsula of Phuket, a tourist economy is developing including small hotels, restaurants and eco-tours that is sure to compete with the more popular resort areas such as Pattaya. One can rent a motor scooter and zip around the island to see traditional rural villages living off of the bounty of marine life, next to half completed hotels and coffee shops. Development seems to be happening in disarray, with seemingly no rhyme or reason. Many of the islanders work at a local market selling cheap wares from China, or perhaps as a maid at a hotel. It is a stunning intersection of modern initiative and traditional life, dotted with lush mountain peaks surrounded by tranquil blue waters.

At Plaloma Cliff Resort, a German-run resort, a modern hotel is being developed in the western style with a swimming pool, restaurant and air-conditioned rooms. If one goes to the backside of the hotel, you can see more traditional Thai accommodations including thatched huts, next to immense palm trees and a Buddhist temple. In fact, the temple seems at the center of the grounds. A large white Buddha with arms raised smiles gleefully, as his neck is laced with beads and flower petals that hide his feet. During the day, countless Thais who work on the grounds or who walk passed on the way to town stop at the foot of the Buddha to offer prayer, a tap on its head, or a simple smile. The Buddha belongs to no one in particular, but everyone seems to enjoy him.

At a bamboo table in the center of the hotel near the restaurant sits James Brunner, owner of the hotel and a resident of Koh Chang for 16 years. He speaks in a high-pitched German accent to a group of tourists from Germany, as he intermittently barks out commands to Thai workers in Thai. He is red faced and intimidating upon first sight. A perfectionist by nature, he came to Thailand in 1977 doing construction work, and like many other Germans, liked the culture and the people and decided to stay and develop the island. He is married to a Thai woman and speaks Thai, although, he would admit, not too well.

“The religion is very strong,” Mr. Brunner says. “But more strong is superstition. Many times you see them in temple and they pray. But they often pray for the lotto. They very superstitious. It is 50/50 between superstition and religion. The monks come and bless the place and makes them feel very happy. In this temple festival if I give money for the temple it makes them happy. If you not believe in ghosts they all believe in ghosts in superstition. Even high management believe in ghosts. They are superstitious. They believe in supernatural things.”

Clifford Geertz (1973: 89) states that religion synthesizes through its historical and ancient symbols, a people’s ethos, including the tone, character and quality of life, moral, aesthetic style, and mood. These symbols, whether it is a Buddhist statue or a Christian Cross, transmit a pattern of meaning by which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitudes about life. By exploring how Germans and Thais express their religious and moral aesthetic, we can grasp more firmly their orientations toward ethics.

Mulder (2003:17) states that Buddhism and ethics have always been at the core of Thai education and that courses in Thai citizenship are included in values based education. However, he also recognizes that Thai society has become more fractured and that traditional notions of Buddhist thought are no longer widely held. Thais may belong to multiple types of religions and are not homogeneously Buddhist. “In South-East Asia, the emergence of a vast middle-class in a market-driven, consumeristic environment, is a novel phenomenon. It resulted in equally vast masses of upwardly mobile people who have to operate in a new, business-like society where their parental moral teachings have seemingly become irrelevant (Mulder 2003: 170). Mulder (2003: 170) goes on to say that religion has become a much more individualistic affair in Thai society and that it is common for people to search for a lifestyle that suits their individual needs.

Mr. Brunner said that the recent development of the island, coupled with poor education and a superstitious, often gambling-style mentality to money has altered the ways Thais see the world—and not necessarily for the better. It is as if the potential fruits of development are seen by Thais, but they have little understanding of the foundation of knowledge and labor that it takes to establish it for themselves, let alone for future generations. “They don’t know basic things. It is one of the worst educational systems in Asia. Worse than Afghanistan. The educational system in Thailand is not much better than in Indonesia. Here I see the teacher who is supposed to speak English and speak one word of English. I know a girl in Bangkok who now works for the government as an English teacher. She speaks much better English than this teacher. If you look for mathematics, for example, they go in their school and you ask four times ten and they cannot do it. They go into the university but they cannot do it.” Mr. Brunner is concerned

because he has to constantly train and retrain his employees, often in the same tasks, and they have little thought for the future to develop work skills.

Mr. Brunner echoes these concerns in an exchange about his experience with Thais and money. “The Thai people spend whatever is in their hand. They spend 100 Baht if he has it in his hand the money turns very quick here. So if the economy booms here the Thai don’t make a good long-term economic decision. My nephew bought a new car for 50,000 Baht on a 10,000 Baht salary. If someone in Switzerland has what they want they buy it used or second hand. The big business community is 80% Thai-Chinese not Chinese, not care for the money. I have a staff here who earns 3,000 Baht a month. So he get paid 50 Baht and with this he bought a bottle of black label whiskey. The normal Thai people has no existence-angst.” This mixing of Buddhism and Capitalism has created a lifestyle that Mulder (2003: 170) calls “the fountainhead of eternal youth but also a child of the times.” Buddhist thoughts have been reinterpreted into a distinguishable lifestyle that emphasizes a consumerist individuality, relegating Buddhism to an ornamental dressing.

Craig Reynolds (2002: 309) concurs with Mulder that Buddhism, which was once one of the strongholds of Thai society, has been altered dramatically by economic development where religious devotees have, “turned to ritualistic practices, termed *prosperity religions* by one observer, which would bring material abundance as well as happiness.” Reynolds goes on to explain how the booming 1990’s economy became the fulfillment of the government’s economic decree, and people saw it as the fulfillment of their prayers. However, Buddhism was also used as a rationale to absorb the increased

uncertainty that development has brought, thus evoking a sense of security in relation to their continuing, although turbulent prosperity.

The entrance to almost any large corporate building in Bangkok is a mixture of east and west. The design of an entranceway or reception area is typically western with sharp angles of glass, steel and stone. However, these are usually also softened by lush tropical indigenous plants, fountains and flowers. Usually a photo or picture of the King and Queen of Thailand gaze down from atop a grand staircase or escalator. In many offices, a small Buddhist altar or photo draped with flowers stands next to a Thai work area, often near a water cooler or near the copy machine. Buddhism is a part of the daily Thai work day, even in the era of computers and cubicles.

The young Thai computer assistant known as “Tom” who works at the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce is a perfect example of this new melding of religion and consumer identity. He expresses respect and use for Buddhism, but he also articulates reservations for its relevancy in modern Thai life, especially in the context of city life, where the culture of global capitalism moves at such a rapid pace. “Religion is very important to the Thai people but the technology and modern things are hiding religion in the backside. When people die or when you are upset or when you lose confidence you go back to the trouble or back to the religions, they are like energize yourself and you mind back to be confident. Religion like a parent in Thailand.” Tom seems to interpret religion as waning in the face of technological advancements that perhaps have more tangible results in people’s lives. Nevertheless, Buddhism obviously plays a critical personal and cultural role.

Tom has plans of opening his own furniture design store in greater Bangkok and sees hard work and determination as critical to his long-term success and economic longevity. He very clearly has bought in to the global capitalist work ethic. He expresses social and moral values much different from the traditional Thai model. “I look up to people who have success and follow but sometimes you have to learn by yourself, but for me I can’t stop my style, but in the future I try to study interior design, because I love it very much. I have my own shop in the market I create by myself, to test my marketing intelligence. I just think about my company in the future.” Tom argues that Buddhism fits perfectly into the capitalistic work ethic. “It is good for work and for society. It’s not fixed it’s not like pressure you. But you can relax when want to. To do with your religion it’s like flexible it’s not fixed like Muslim where you have to pray everyday and you have to follow the regulation. But for the Buddhism its free style.”

It seems as if Buddhist principles can ease the tensions of an increasingly competitive and fractured society and can be utilized effectively in a market driven work culture that relies on looser hierarchical relations and roles. “It plays a role in avoiding conflict and keeping cool, says Sirigul Sakornrattanagul, of the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce. “We avoid to confront them. Buddhist says if you are under pressure, you don’t have to smile. We make negative thoughts to positive thoughts. Most middle managers we have this exercise our problems in the workplace. Why we have problems in the workplace and discuss not how to solve it but how to live in harmony—this is our way of life.” It seems that Buddhism has become a way of being that insulates Thai people from the new cultural values and roles that are placed upon them by modern

society, roles that they often feel uncomfortable with, and they perhaps disagree with, but can do little to change.

German Religion and the Private Sphere

The young German economist named Valerie Mosberg seemed to express this strict division in Germany when discussing religion. “Germany is not really a religious country, and people in Germany feel that it is stupid to go to church and to believe in God, you find that a lot in Germany. Religion is more private. Religion is something you do when you go to church and stays in the church, and that is a big difference. Whereas here (Thailand), religion is part of every little thing they do, they pray to the house ghost. I would never think of a German company going to a ghost house or having a company prayer.” Valerie goes on to say that Germans feel uncomfortable discussing religious beliefs or perspectives and that it is taught through social norms that it is silly to do so.

Asia-Pacific conference officer Sebastian Doring of the German-Thai Chamber of Commerce also expresses discomfort over the German perspective of religion in public life. “It is getting less and less and you can tell from less and less people going to church, and it is more common if you leave the cities and if you go to the countryside then you have more religion and you have more traditional religions, and the bigger cities are going the more, um, the religion means less.” Sebastian says that the changing nature of society, particularly in the larger German cities, the influence of economics and technology, have altered the ways Germans perceive life, and that values are based less on tradition but on one’s own experiences. “I kind of set my own goals, and say I will do this and okay I will preach that, and actually in background I think, what do I need god for? That is disappearing with a lot of people, they are more interested in individuality,

and coming from German society the more God or church or religion in general is fading away.”

While religion plays perhaps a less crucial role in Thai society than in the past, religion in German life plays a considerably weaker role than in Thailand, and weaker still compared to most developed European nations. Nees (2000 :55) explains that while religious observance is actually quite diverse in Germany, it is relegated to the private sphere because of Germany’s history of religious persecution, the German respect for science and rational knowledge, as well as the general strength of the division of the public and private spheres in Germany, which places limitations on what can be publicly discussed.

Max is from a smaller town in Germany and expresses this cultural variation between urban and rural perspectives of religion. “This is different, this of course I have seen in Bonn, and I am a bit Christian in the church, and we went every Saturday evening, or I am sorry, Sunday evening, and we met with a lot of students, a lot of young people we went to the church every Sunday evening, so. So that was different than you experience.” Yet, Max also expresses deep reservations about the ways Germans reflect on topics of religion. “I think the highest difference is that like as you can tell now with, we speak, if you bring up the topic we start speaking very critical about the church and everybody has his opinion, um, you would be like, you would be or criticizing religion like we did in just five minutes now, so if you are religious and another person is not in Germany, you would say, I think natürlich. I think Catholic religion is bad.” Max seems to be saying that while Germans do believe and participate in religious life, that it is

perceived as weak or irrational to believe too strongly, and that to criticize religion is socially acceptable.

Habermas (1997) has done an extensive social critique of German society and has dealt specifically with issues of religion in German society to illustrate the social historical factors that have led Germans to express their beliefs in this way. Habermas argues that an increasingly fractured society has taken shape in Germany because of reunification between East and West, generational splits between pre and post-war Germans and the creation of a new social system that rewards individuality due to Germany's weakening social safety net and the emergence of global competitiveness (Habermas 1997: 164). Most of the German participants are a direct product of this German social culture and express religious values that correspond to this view. These participants have grown up in a Germany that is less secure, more globally integrated and more critical of the past. They do not rely on German culture, history and traditions as much as their predecessors and they see themselves as global rather than local actors.

In general, these more global centered Germans are less rigid than their parents and more in tune with cultural differences. They may not understand the nuance of Thai culture and especially the place of Buddhism in Thai social life, but they would never do anything to disparage it either. "I think that the people that come to this country they are being told that the most important thing is not to criticize the royal family and the king or the traditions," Said Max.

Conclusions

Thus the intersection of religion is quite obvious in the world of Thais and Germans, yet it is perceived in quite different ways. Germans relegate their religious

beliefs to the private world of family and church, something rarely spoken about in public, and only then with criticism and perhaps even scorn. One's moral and ethical inclinations are certainly a part of German tradition, but not so much as before, and more reliance than ever is placed on individual thought, experience and education. Religion is seen as something done in a compartment, during certain times and settings and only with those you trust the most. Germans acknowledge and respect Thai Buddhism but want little else from it, so it seems. There is no participation in Buddhist practices and less of a deeper knowledge or curiosity about just what it means to those they work with. There is a hint of skepticism about the entire thing, perhaps some misunderstanding about just what Thais are doing, how they worship and just what they worship for. They are perhaps perceived less serious in their beliefs because they smile or pray for less time. However, there is little to no frustration with it, and Germans have come to expect it as the Thai way of life.

Thais know even less than Germans about what, if anything, Germans believe in beyond this world. This is perhaps due to the secrecy with which Germans hold the subject; they rarely talk about it. They are also not working in Germany, but in Thailand, and so the presence of Buddhism and Thai religion is much more pervasive and normal. No Thai participants ever mentioned a German doing or saying anything disrespectful toward their beliefs. One gets the impression, however, that the chasm between Germans and Thais is greater because of religion. Germans are driven by the pursuit of quality, efficiency and productivity, while Thais are never really "driven," but seek the enjoyment of their work as play, a social undertaking to be enjoyed for the benefit of one's peers, and a job well done. Yet this chasm does influence the ways Thais and Germans work

together. In just what specific ways will be pursued in the data analysis portion of this dissertation.

Richard Kearney (1999: 18) says that the author of a narrative continually weighs his right to poetic license against the ethical duty to represent the past as it actually happened. Each conversation is mediation between recollection and creativity, as the speaker and listener co-create a meaningful event in the act of language that is then transformed when made into a text and re-configured in subsequent interpretations. Therefore, this presentation is an arrangement, among many possibilities, that constitutes one synthesis between the perspective of the author and the participants on the topic of ethical identities in global organizations. This configuration is ultimately an ethical action in itself, and reflects the truth of the speakers' words as much as the author's own interpretation. While the subject of ethics was often not spoken of directly, how Thais and Germans work together and how the social conditions of each of their cultures influences how they see their world and one another surely constitutes their ethical orientation. The data presentation confirmed that the topics of socialization, education and religion can offer detailed and fascinating clues as to the ways ethical identities are negotiated in German-Thai organizations.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the data is how conscious the participants are of the global aspect of their work, the increasing interconnectedness of societies and cultures, and the changing nature of organizational life in a competitive global market. And yet the participants also display isolation and distance from one another, especially about the more personal aspects of one another's lives, than one might expect. In *The Post-National Constellation*, Jurgen Habermas (2001: 55) says that only the

consciousness of a transformed citizenry, “can pressure global actors to change their own self-understanding sufficiently to begin to see themselves as members of an international community who are compelled to cooperate with one another, and hence to take one another’s interests into account.” Habermas says the process of globalization is not just economic, but introduces other perspectives from where we see one another’s interdependence and shared fate (Habermas 2001: 55).

While there is increasing economic interconnectedness between Germany and Thailand, it seems that their willingness to interject themselves in daily matters of one another’s cultural perspectives needs considerable scrutiny in lieu of the massive cultural implications their economic activities are having on both societies. German Embassy Economic Advisor Pagaval Ratpanpairoj sees the transfer of German technology as crucial to Thailand’s development and economic competitiveness, but that the government often looks the other way when it comes to hiring practices and environmental degradation. “I think that globalization can make a change for the, power, to get more power. For those in power globalization is a good thing, for those not in power globalization....Big fish, little fish, market liberalization is not good for the Thai community.”

The author has attempted to configure the data in a manner that initiates a dialogue on how social conditions influence the ethical identities of Thais and Germans, to express how the data speaks to the research categories. Habermas (1979: 11) says that there are two levels of explication of meaning, including the symbolic formation of an action such as a word or symbol, but beyond this is a meaning that lies below the surface, which illuminates deeper structures that point to underlying cultural norms and rules. In

Chapter Seven of this exploration, the data analysis will attempt to more deeply critique, analyze and uncover underlying meanings in the data in order to offer insight into the question of ethical identities in global contexts. This is where the author more directly inserts himself in a dialogue with the data and the question at hand. The research orientation casts light on the underlying social responsibility that we have as local and global players in the development of just and ethical social narratives, where Thais and Germans, and people of all cultures, can ask more informed questions about how our economic activities are altering our personal and social lives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA ANALYSIS

Global Contexts and the Separation of Public and Private Spheres

As the global economy takes root in more countries and in continuously new contexts, the intersection of culture, communication, history and social norms, often in the form of stories, behaviors, and even popular songs and advertisements, creates a multidimensional narrative of social interactions never before seen in history. While there has always been trade, international travel, inter-cultural exchange and, of course, imperialism, it has never been coordinated so efficiently, at such a rapid pace, across so many nations, and among so many diverse groups of people. The intersection of German and Thai culture in Thailand is one micro-narrative among seemingly infinite macro-narratives of continuously disparate, complex and sometimes confusing configurations. To make sense of the ways people in different cultures interpret themselves, let alone others, is a daunting task, but can also be creative, challenging and useful to managers, educators and researchers. In an ever widening global context, perhaps it is most realistic, and meaningful, to explore just how a small group of individuals make sense of this dynamic in the face of increasing social fragmentation.

The data illustrates that participants in global contexts experience the strain of preserving social traditions while working according to market driven, western technological values that challenge a cohesive perception of self. Sirigul Sakonthangal explains, “Why not start now and think of the future and what we can do for our identity? Even the young people’s music they don’t try to translate the words into Thai. No meaning, no understanding. It’s o.k., even though they don’t know the meaning—they go

along.” Sirirat Sukarapak echoes the crisis of identity and the proliferation of technology in Thai society, “I think the future will come very quickly. And the technology will come quickly but the people will not follow them. I see it that a couple of people will make a profit but most people will suffer. A couple of family will do well.” The question remains if Thais can sustain a cohesive sense of self that honors their traditions while still incorporating global participation.

Habermas (1998: 27) says that “How we conduct our lives is determined more or less by how we understand ourselves. Thus ethical insights influence how we orient our lives through the interpretation of our self-understanding.” As Thais and Germans engage in the global economy with one another, they assert their individual identities as much as the larger social values of their cultures. Germans are engaged in the economic preservation of their homeland, a rather cohesive, economically privileged and homogeneous society facing economic competition from developing nations, such as Thailand, which challenges Germany’s social contract and highly respected work culture. The German people are struggling with their cultural identity, and find that they must coordinate economic activities with outsiders in order to maintain their own high standard of living. On the contrary, Thailand is still predominantly a rural agrarian society. But Bangkok has been thrust into the global market as a second-tier regional economic power which is having national and regional repercussions (Askew 2002: 86). In the face of rapid economic development, Thais in higher social positions are attempting to transform their society, thus altering how all Thais live, work, and think of themselves, while trying to maintain their religious, family and historical traditions.

From the perspective of economic development, this cultural exchange is perhaps mutually inter-dependent, as the Thais provide affordable resources, a compliant and inexpensive labor force and regional marketing positioning for the Germans in order to compete with Asian competitors and deliver goods to developing markets. The Thais need the Germans in order to learn quality engineering, managerial and technological skills in order to develop its own products and services and to become more economically independent and competitive. However, from the perspective of individual identity and the intersection of people in cultures, which is the focus of this study, the pragmatic daily interdependence of life is far more personal, intuitive and complex. Habermas (1998: 161) continues that the ethical self-understanding of citizens in a democratic community is an often fluid and circulatory process generated through the legal institutionalization of citizens' communication. As we explore the ethical self-understandings of Germans and Thais, we must remember that the text offers a specific moment in time from which to broaden our self-understandings in relation to the other and not decisive conclusions or generalizations. What we may miss is the universality of our assertions in the hope of clear answers. But what we gain is the spark of interest that may allow us to more accurately assess our self-understandings and their relationship to others, who come to us from quite different social, political and historical conditions.

Globalization and the Fracturing of Interconnected Life-Worlds

As Thais and Germans work together in economic and social activity, what they say to and about one another contains more than mere words. Habermas (2001: 134) states that communicative action is a circular process in which individuals initiate situations for which they become accountable, but are simultaneously products of the

traditions surrounding them and the processes through which they are socialized. The participants in this study have continually affirmed that their life-world provides a context in which to reach understanding, but also furnishes understanding itself (Habermas 2001: 135). In this sense, the participants have freely participated in the creation of their own thoughts, feelings and accounts; yet they are constrained by the social, political, historical, and now more than ever, the economic context in which they live. Therefore, this analysis asks, to what extent have the life-worlds of the participants initiated a mutual recognition of the other as sharing and co-creating the conditions of their interdependence? But also, to what extent has their relationship, identities and communication been fractured by the advent of globalization?

The world of Thais and Germans is actualized in the mutual exchange of language, which simultaneously makes reference to the world, while saying something about the world and the social relationships they share (Habermas 2001: 136). A conversation is not simply the telling of a series of events in the objective world, but a configuration of legitimately ordered interactions that makes reference to a subjective world, or the world of culture, history and traditions. As we have seen in the words of the Thai and German participants, the language they use makes reference to the objective world that they share, but the meaning they make of those worlds is distinctively Thai and distinctively German. They are bound by the immediate context in which they inhabit, but carry a cultural tradition that often leads to collaboration--but also competing interpretations. Habermas (2001: 138) explains, "On one side we have the horizon of unquestioned, intersubjectively shared, nonthematized certitudes that participants in communication have *at their backs*. On the other side, participants in communication face

the communicative contents constituted within the world.” Thus the co-creation of ethical decisions in inter-cultural contexts is an expression of the events themselves, but also the horizon constituted by the participants’ cultural experience.

However, globalization has fractured the life-worlds of social actors while calling into question the same cultural, historical traditions that have allowed generations to interpret their world with some level of predictability and cohesiveness (Mulder 2003: 3). Individuals can no longer participate according to unconscious norms and taken-for-granted-ness, and those who do are relegated to the lowest economic and social position. In daily life, the global culture continually asserts new values in the form of mass media, technology, advertising and of course, in conversation. The development of Bangkok itself is a striking example of the rapid ascendance of global cultural hegemony and the displacement of historical tradition. Within a few blocks, one can see the divided world of those who function in an increasingly technologically interconnected world, and those who linger in the barrios of peasant life.

Political and economic institutions have been thrust into the public realm of life and work in order to supplant the weakness of local culture in the face of global development. One needs only to return a few years to the economic boom of Bangkok in the mid 1990’s to see how the influence of the WTO, The International Monetary fund and global investors simultaneously created and destroyed Thailand’s hopes in a matter of months (Askew 2002: 87). What has resulted is a dominant paradigm of economic norms, values and context that comes from a world outside of Thailand which weakens its environmental and social fabric. Ricoeur (1991: 326) concurs in saying, “The man of technology, of economic calculation, of social mechanisms, is the first man who lives

universally and who understands himself by means of this universal rationality.” But Thailand’s future is also dependent upon this development in order to sustain its rapidly rising middle-class and its consumerist economy. It seems too late to turn back now.

Habermas (1998 109-112) outlines the emergence of the modern “nation-state” as an administrative system whose performance is based on loosely held but legally binding unregulated economic markets that obey a logic which escapes state control. Nations were originally integrated by geographic boundaries through which customs, traditions and language were transmitted according to physical space such as settlements and neighborhoods. However, due to economic activities that increasingly move people, goods and information at an increasingly rapid pace, populations have become severed from the social ties of early society, becoming geographically mobile but also isolated (Habermas 1998: 112). We see this dichotomy clearly in the Thai and German participants who inhabit multiple geographic and social worlds, simultaneously acting in a set of loosely structured activities that cut across multiple linguistic, economic and spatial terrain.

People on the front-lines of globalization participate in the context of the history of the host country, in this case Thailand, but simultaneously enter into cooperative agreements with other global citizens which may or may not benefit their own communities. Habermas (1998: 114) argues, “Like private persons in the market, people pursue their respective interests in the free-for-all of international power politics. The traditional image of external sovereignty is dressed up in national colors and in this guise awakens new energies.” The costs of globalization on Thai society, particularly the disastrous effects on the environment, families and the Thai social system have been well

chronicled (Mulder, Reynolds, Aksew). Yet Thais are continually conditioned to believe that their future is dependent on the success of an economic model that perhaps goes against their own self interest. As we have seen in the data, while Thai participants continually critique their German counterparts and the conditions in which they work, they are also optimistic about the fruits that globalization is supposed to reap, and in fact, look to the west as a model of its best possibilities.

A new global nationalism has emerged which Habermas calls a form of “fiction” because historical social boundaries have been replaced by arbitrary legal contracts which are defined by powerful political entities without legitimacy (1998: 116). In other words, the emergence of global institutions such as German global companies have replaced the historical traditions of the host country they inhabit with social norms in the form of economic, legal and contractual agreements. Ricoeur (1991: 327) calls this a new “socio-economic plane that is in reality, abstract. And its abstraction is reinforced from the constitution of an international market and the world-wide extension of methods of work.” New imaginary boundaries are being established that replace a geographic place in the form of a fictitious reality that is legitimized by its sheer existence (Habermas 1998: 116). This has profound influences on national as well as personal identity, because the context, norms and conditions of everyday life are constructed in the larger global context of free markets and consumerism, while historical traditions, practices and beliefs have been displaced.

Participants in global business contexts simultaneously participate in local happenings and distant events in the form of multiple communicative mediums such as money, technology and laws (Habermas 1998: 120). And while the function of daily life

is much more immediate, rapid, and technologically interconnected, the data suggests that there is an expanding global consciousness that does not result in greater sharing and embrace of one another's life-world, personal history and cultural experience. Habermas (1998: 125) argues, "In this postpolitical world the multinational corporation becomes the model for all conduct. Its vanishing point is a completely decentered world society that splinters into a disordered mass of self-reproducing and self-steering functional systems." The corporation has become the context of the life-world as the traditional role of the state has been undermined by the power of a global system which operates increasingly beyond the control of even the highest political actors. As a result, participants lack a universe of inter-subjectively shared meanings in which to behave humanely toward one another, or to even understand one's social position.

The use of the English language as the primary channel of communication in global life clearly illustrates the tension between local and global participation and the fracturing of identity. It is now estimated that English is the second most spoken language in the world behind Mandarin, and the most used language on the Internet (The Economist : 2005). English has long been the primary language of the international business world. The participants in this study all spoke English proficiently and many mentioned how its use or misuse determines organizational advantage and success. Habermas (1998: 18) explains that language functions as the most important medium for interpersonal coordination and that it provides a normative background from which to express moral discourse. And yet English is often not the primary language of participants in global contexts. It has been well documented by researchers as diverse as Sapir-Worf and Heidegger how language carries within it certain social, historical and

cultural values reflecting cultural norms. The point is that Thai and German participants lose many aspects of their own cultural value systems as they take on the language that is deemed valid within the global social context. Thus, while social actors participate in one set of global communicative values, their own linguistic and cultural values are often ignored.

Habermas clearly makes this linguistic distinction in clarifying the difference between *context-dependent* language, which refers to what language has within it and *context-independent* language it, which is what language points to. “I have shown that the systematic connection of participant and observer perspective is constitutive of roles, that is, for reciprocal normative behavioral expectations. This splits the domain of the reality of symbolically mediated interactions in two (Habermas 2001: 144). As participants in global contexts communicate in language that does not reflect their socio-cultural norms, they become observers of their actions, fractured from their own cultural life-world in order to participate in a global economy. The result is that speakers become conditioned to a relative context of action that is based on economic, legal and perhaps ethnocentric ways of communication that distances them from their own socio-cultural framework.

In addition, within Habermas’ (2001: 125) conception of Communicative Action is the distinction that language is understood as a medium wherein consensus about social interpretations is secured as members share a linguistically common culture of values and norms. “Sharing a common symbolic system means belonging to an intersubjectively binding form of life. Here, language is represented essentially as the medium of participation in the same culture. The commonality here is not only through using the same language, but also recognizing the same values” (Habermas 2001: 125-

126). The concept of Communicative Action rests on the participants' attitude toward reaching mutual understanding through a process of shared recognition of universal validity claims. However, the process of participants coordinating their mutual values and expectations in a language other than their own, calls into the question the validity of their claims in a social context beyond their personal and cultural control.

Mulder (2003) clarifies this argument in his critique of Thai society, in that participation in a global context can fracture identity, creating new social, physical and linguistic boundaries. "What is meant is the increasing importance of money in social life. Relationships and goods become commodified, get assigned a value that stands apart from the persons or needs involved. The economy appears to go its own way, irrespective of individual wishes, and gives rise to a market-driven society, an archetypal *Gesellschaft* in which people pursue their personal gain" (Mulder 2003: 3). In the pursuit of globalization, Thais may have forfeited their cultural eccentricities, history and values in favor of a homogenized market-oriented value system that may ultimately undermine Thai social life.

In this first part of the data analysis, we have illustrated the tension that exists between Thais and Germans as they participate in daily life in the context of transnational global contexts that have supplanted traditional historical, geographical and spatial boundaries and how this has fractured the social identities of corporate participants as they attempt to communicate and co-create ethical decisions in a language and context outside of their own. Ricoeur (1991: 329) continues, "Whence the strange paradox in which today's advanced societies are caught: on the one hand, modern nations enter in technological competition in order to survive: however, to this very extent they are

caught up in the dissolving action exerted by technology.” Taken-for-granted, historically constituted social norms have been replaced by binding legal agreements and the interjection of new communication mediums such as technology to transform the ways global participants reach mutually binding decisions. As Habermas has argued, these global contexts are so powerful as to operate outside of the authority of national governments, asserting their own economic and social hegemony so as to disrupt institutional lines of authority and social cohesiveness. Local people are acting in multiple social contexts at once, and their actions may simultaneously help and hurt their own cultures.

Barth (2000: 19) explains boundaries as more than mere physical space, but images and concepts that lead to a particular conceptual construct that people sometimes impose on the world. Barth (2000: 20) explains that boundaries uphold certain desired values while suppressing others and continues that the concept of boundary is a particularly western concept that projects extensive implicit assumptions about social, political and economic norms and is particularly evident in modern organizations. “In British social anthropology, the same image is enshrined in our model of corporate groups, defined by their including and excluding rights to their respective shared estates. Finally, in a further imaginative leap, we can use boundaries as a metaphor for how abstract categories, natural classes and kinds, are separated and marked off from one another” (Barth 2000: 23). Impressing boundaries in global corporate settings creates a social mentality that facilitates group cohesion or division within groups, promoting members who conform to organizational standards and setting apart those who do not. The data clearly illustrates a spatial, linguistic and ideological boundary which separates

many Thais and Germans implicitly, and often explicitly, in the social context of organizational life.

Social contexts have fractured in such a way as to become what Habermas (2001: 155) calls “the splitting of communication into public and private worlds,” which could have devastating influences on personal identity. Habermas (155) says that systematically distorted communication, which here takes the form of global contexts, becomes the norm for actualizing speech acts. He continues that identity pathologies result in a loss of meaning “because communicative processes continue as long as the violation of some of their transcendental presuppositions is not manifest, that is, as long as it is not recognized and admitted by the participants” (Habermas 2001: 155). In other words, global social norms and language use becomes institutionalized and validated in the context of a weakened national state and the omnipotence of global economics. The hegemonic value system of globalization becomes stabilized and conflicts of identity arise as the international marketplace of social norms ignores the recognition of local cultures.

The task of Critical Hermeneutics is to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of globalization and the institutionalization of social norms which have distorted public life and fractured cultural identities. In order to re-configure the identities of global participants, we need competing interests to arrange the traces of the past in the form of a narrative that binds individual and public discourse, connecting the public and private spheres, in a shared practice of participation and reification, which recovers the authenticity of one’s cultural life in the quest for a shared journey rather than an imposed interpretation. Habermas (2001: 18) recommends, “A consciousness of collective

belonging is necessary if freely associated allies are to identify with one another as citizens.” A communicative context that spreads over national consciousness must still acknowledge the particularism of historical, cultural and political people. “In a postnational communicative context of this sort, an awareness of the collective membership needs to emerge from the background of an already existing fabric of interests” (Habermas 2001: 19).

In this next chapter, I will explore how, in light of the data, Thais and Germans can engage in a dialogue that connects each to his own, as well as the other’s historical perspective to initiate the re-appropriation of social norms, values and customs in light of an expanding and boundary-less global context. The ritual of narrative emplotment, where leaders of ethical organizations allow a public space for disparate interests to integrate the expressions of social and historical symbols, from both the public and private sphere, can act as a powerful process of shared meaning that co-creates both a local and global life-context. “Kearney (2002: 4) states, “In our era of fragmentation and fracture, I shall be arguing that narrative provides us with one of our most viable forms of identity—individual and communal.” The hermeneutic task places our understandings within our traditions while at the same time questioning their influences and biases so as to be more open to the interpretive process (Gadamer 1998: 239). In this way, participants in globalization are fixed within their own context of self, family, society and state, which allows the voices of one’s cultural past to be heard in the interpretation of new meanings.

Narrative Emplotment and the Reconfiguring of Fractured Identity in Global Life

The preceding section of the data analysis argues that global corporate settings create contexts which influence social norms, and values in the form of explicit and implicit boundaries which fracture Thai and German cultural identity in favor of capitalistic, market-oriented and consumerist values often at odds with the participants' own lives. Gottesman (1998 :151) argues this point compellingly in saying, "Those with the most advanced technology have power over those who are less advanced. Whether intentionally or not they impose their technologies, patterns of work, organizational, political, educational and cultural institutions." This has created what Habermas and Ricoeur both call a fiction or imagined corporate value system that is economically, politically and socially pervasive as to supplant traditional value systems in favor of social practices which divide cultural life into public and private spheres that support global cultural hegemony. This global fiction is portrayed in the corporate actions, symbols, explicit and implicit norms, and legally binding agreements participants engage in on a daily basis.

The perspective that globalization is an extensive, interrelated, but also fractured and often contradictory fiction, is a powerful metaphor from which to explore the underlying social distortions this paradigm creates in the cultural identities of Thais and Germans. Ricoeur's narrative emplotment is a compelling, not to mention creative orientation toward ethical decision-making that allows Thai and German participants to co-create their shared world and bridge the gap between their actions and the historical institutions in which they inhabit. The power of interpreting globalization in new configurations aims at "demystifying symbolism by unmasking the un-avowed forces that

are concealed within it” (Ricoeur 1997: 16-17). Narrative allows an intelligibility to arise in the form of a cohesive plot that synthesizes the disparate events of our lives into a story that participants can co-create in order to recapture their identities within the social fragmentation of globalization.

For Kearney (1999: 26), all identity is essentially narrative and all historical communities are constituted by stories. “When one recognizes that one’s identity is fundamentally narrative in character, one discovers an ineradicable openness and indeterminacy at the root of one’s collective memory (Kearney 1999: 26). In this way, allowing Thais and Germans to tell their individual stories allows them to see their place within the larger global context as well as within one another’s local cultural experience. As the data suggests, alienation in organizations emerges when participants are fractured from one another’s historicity and stuck in an historical interpretation that fails to acknowledge the present life-world influenced by globalization (Kearney 1999: 26). Ricoeur (1981: 185) continues, “The aim of all hermeneutics is to struggle against cultural distance and historical alienation. Interpretation brings together, equalizes, renders contemporary and similar.” Narrative allows participants to reconfigure a more inclusive story in order to create a more cohesively understood life.

Communication, culture and ethics intersect in the exploration of ethical decision-making in the everyday actions of organizational actors. A parallel can be drawn between this thesis and Ricoeur’s ethical narrative, which is the process of composing a narrative that brings together three dimensions including reference, communication and self-understanding (Ricoeur 1991: 432-433). The process of hermeneutics configures the internal coordination of a work and refigures daily life into narrative form, which when

read, transforms the experience of the reader, which opens up a horizon of possibilities to project a new organizational narrative different from the ones in which Thais and Germans currently participate. “The result is that the reader belongs to the experiential horizon of the work imaginatively, and the horizon of his action concretely” (Ricoeur 1991: 431). As Thais and Germans participate in the configuration of the text of one another’s experience in private and public, local and global life, a powerful new narrative emerges which may complement or challenge the prevailing conduct, norms and behaviors in organizations.

Ricoeur (1981: 190-191) argues that narrative emplotment can pierce the illusions of participants who are immersed in pervasive ideological conditions beyond their control, such as globalization, by critiquing our assumptions in the formation of alternate plots. “Our understanding is based on prejudices which are linked to our position in the relation of society, a position which is partially unknown to us. Moreover, we are propelled to act by hidden interests (Ricoeur 1981: 191). “As the reader interprets the text, she is distanced from her own conditions, which allows her to incorporate the world of the text as she returns to herself under a re-appropriation of self and other. In other words, the reader’s imaginative interplay with the text illuminates the hidden conditions of her existence by exposing the underlying attachments of her predicament in the world. She will be influenced by this new experience and begin to imagine new possibilities, from which she will undoubtedly act differently over time.

Narrative emplotment also holds the opportunity to meld interpersonal and organizational life to create ethical organizations as we interpret one another’s life experiences in the stories we read and then speak about with each other. Narrative allows

us to be influenced by the text to confront our own prejudices, similarities and differences in the formulation of actions that will influence the ways members interact in the organization. The quest for a compelling narrative reflects those whose stories have not yet been told, as well as those forthcoming stories yet to be heard. "Telling a story, we observed, is deploying an imaginary space for thought experiments in which moral judgment operates in a hypothetical mode" (Ricoeur 1992: 170). Narrative acts as a continuous exchange between imagination, interpretation and action among organizational members old and new, from diverse cultures, experiences and conditions.

To understand this dialectic between reading and acting, narrative and life, is to return to Gadamer's concept of play, which is an experience of transcendence, where the reader gives herself over to the text, in a form of imaginative movement, where the presentation of a world in the text allows her to suspend her current reference toward a new representation (Ricoeur 1981: 186-187). Just as the reading of a highly abstract metaphoric poem can illuminate the unspoken social truths of life, so too can play allow the reader to come closer to the essential taken-for-granted-ness of everyday existence. In play, Thai and German participants let go of their egocentric role identifications, as they relinquish the costume of everyday theatre, and return to the honest expression of their authentic selves.

An example of this hermeneutic inquiry, participation, emplotment and narrative as a form of ethical play is illustrated in the data by Thai Public Relations Manager Sirigul Sakonthangal, who spoke of an old Thai folk song that had been re-appropriated for a commercial advertisement. "The meaning of the song...Phu Yai Li (She begins singing the song)...which is the village chief saying to his people to feed the

chickens, plant rice and this song is coming back in advertisements. And the song asks you to reflect on the government which works with the local people and how to communicate with one another.” Thais and Germans could participate in the co-creation of ethical decisions as they encounter this song in the form of a text or by simply translating the words of the song into language. The song becomes the means by which Thais can explain and reflect on their past, cultural identity and agrarian history in the face of globalization. Germans can learn about the Thai way of life and how Thais are negotiating their identities within a new social, economic and political context. Perhaps Germans can discuss stories, myths and legends from their own culture which parallel the message here, and work to learn from one another’s socio-cultural experiences to participate in greater personal and inter-cultural understanding.

Ethical narratives do not have to be stodgy, one-dimensional or simply historical, although they should strive to accurately and respectfully represent cultural practices with dignity. “The most basic point to recall, is I think, that stories make possible the ethical sharing of a common world with others in that they are invariably a mode of discourse” (Kearney 2002: 150). The public forum for Thais and Germans to participate in a dialogue about their own histories and the modern challenges of globalization acts to bind them in a shared linguistic experience that acts as a form of catharsis, belonging and ethics. As they realize their identities as essentially narrative in character, they are also compelled to acknowledge the participation of others as contingent upon the full expression of themselves, because they are simultaneously actors and observers of one another’s life stories (Kearney 2002: 5). A collaborative organizational culture may emerge that liberates the participants from fear, distortion and

misunderstanding. Kearney (2002: 4) goes on to explain that narrative is both individual and communal, and offers our greatest hope of recapturing our fractured selves.

To reconnect their fragmented selves, Germans and Thais can create a sense of participation by unifying public and private space and including cultural and historical archives, cultural artifacts and what Ricoeur (1998: 117) calls “reflective instruments,” such as calendars and documents, which become points of reference to spark a dialogue about the meaning of the past in light of current events. Reflective instruments also act as the reification of our own ethical actions, as they represent either unchanging and outdated interpretations or contemporary reflections of the full horizon of modern life. Kearney (2002: 69) states, “Without the public conversation about the validity of our testimonies, it is difficult to avoid the polar extremes of (a) dogmatic realism or (b) skeptical relativism.” Shared rituals, such as a common eating area, storytelling or spiritual observance, connect Germans and Thais to their histories which they continually re-appropriate in the presence of one another. Ritual allows integration of past, present and future including public and private space, by projecting a shared rather than fractured narrative.

As explained in the theoretical orientation of this paper, ethics is not a tidy formula of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, but an often messy and sometimes painful process of argumentation, critical reasoning and emotional catharsis. Narratives come in a variety of forms and contexts, as diverse as the individuals, experiences and interpretive frameworks they represent. The interpretation of the text by successive Thai and German participants is a continual critique of their social conditions and the ongoing re-appropriation of new personal and organizational horizons. The text becomes a living

document that points to the failure or success of organizations to account for these competing interpretations and projected horizons of participants engaged in the act of appropriation. This continual process is never complete: “It is because absolute knowledge is impossible that the conflict of interpretations is insurmountable and inescapable” (Ricoeur 1981: 193). Interpretive ethics is not about seeking absolute knowledge, but cultivating a disposition to reach ever closer toward a broader horizon of self-understanding—always in relation to the self-understanding of the other.

Critical to understanding the relationship between self and other in organizational narratives is Ricoeur’s (1992: 199) concept of institutions in society as a mediator of goods and services, but even more so, as the intersection of public and private spheres and the embodiment of social justice. “It denotes a feature fundamental to all institutions, to the extent that they govern the apportionment of roles, tasks, and advantages or disadvantages between the members of society” (Ricoeur 1999: 200). Ricoeur (200) goes on to illustrate that an organization is more than the sum of its members, but a social reification with specific socio-cultural norms that becomes a system of roles. A just institution is one that acts cohesively in the interests of individual, interpersonal and societal components, and proportions equally its rewards and burdens. Our interpersonal solicitude with others as sharing a similar life-world and social experience allows us to project equality to anonymous persons with whom we may never encounter, but who are equally entitled to social, economic and politically just actions.

As Thais and Germans become entrenched in the organizational norms, values and roles which support global economic activities, deepening their openness toward culturally different people who share a similar temporal and contextual experience may

awaken their solicitude in acting more justly toward others who are like themselves. Acknowledging their shared pain, suffering and joys may fuse them into what Ricoeur (202) calls “an infinite mutual indebtedness,” where actions are deliberated according to the fair apportionment of justice rather than selfishness, because of the interconnectedness of their lives. Habermas (1998 :58) concurs that discourse ethics is realized in a process of “ideal role taking,” in which participants equally engage in dual perspective-taking in non-coercive rational argumentation, to project their life experiences upon one another into a “we perspective.” An ethics appropriate to the needs and situations of participants emerges in the successive undertaking of generalizable interests (Habermas 1998: 58). In short, through the consistent inquiry and critique of their actions, participants co-create normative contexts in which mutually shared interests are expressed in continually new narrative configurations.

Habermas (1998: 216) asserts that ethics relates to the conception of the good life if it is “equally good for everyone” and is based on strong evaluations, questions and self-understanding. Open communication, public space and dialogue are essential to non-coercive and rational ethical systems and reached in the shared conception of the good and a desirable authentic life (Habermas 1998: 218). “In such discussions the participants clarify the way they want to understand themselves as citizens of a specific region, as heirs to a specific culture, which traditions they want to perpetuate and which they want to discontinue, how they want to deal with their history, with one another, with nature and so on” (Habermas 1998: 218). Discourse ethics in organizations encompasses the life-world in its entirety in order to authentically reflect the lives of participants. It asserts

that one's historicity and socio-cultural experiences are not neutralized in global corporate settings but integral to one's personal and professional identity.

To co-create a narrative ethics involves moving beyond physical and social boundaries to include those social values reflected in communities, churches, schools and history. A comprehensive narrative ethics permeates multiple boundaries because the influence of globalization touches all aspects of public and private life. The challenge for global actors is to continually meet the demand of incorporating the perspectives of new members who may be from different cultures or sub-cultures, who are socialized within diverse social structures, but who bring a new interpretation of themselves and the world. "And this network also forms the horizon within which the citizens of the nation, willingly or not, conduct the ethical-political discourses in which they attempt to reach agreement on their self understanding (Habermas 1998: 219). Nations and cultures will surely change, and there is a continual negotiation between the past and future as new members of organizations reflect new social values; therefore, an ethical dialogue encompasses the traditions of history as well as the hopes for the future. Habermas (1998:222) concludes that cultures sustain themselves through the social traditions that bind its members, while allowing those same traditions to be critically examined in light of new information and the influences from people from other shores.

Cultures willing to participate in the development of modern global ethical practices embrace traditions while incorporating change in the process of transforming themselves into a new collective identity (Habermas 1998: 223). Developing nations such as Thailand do not have to be engulfed by modern western practices, but act collectively in an informed national dialogue that includes outsiders in the hopes of initiating social

changes while honoring the traditions of the past. For instance, tensions exist between rural and urban Thais as they experience essentially two worlds--one agrarian and one technological. What would the ramifications be of a national dialogue that critically examines how Germans and Thais can work together to form a more unified forward-looking cultural vision, where rural Thais could participate in globalization, and urban Thais can act to better manage its broader social effects? Habermas (224) concludes, "Coexistence with equal rights for these forms of life requires the mutual recognition of different cultural memberships: all persons must also be recognized as members of ethical communities integrated around different conceptions of the good."

Conclusions

Chapter Seven of the data analysis argues that global corporate organizational contexts are powerful international entities that possess technological, market-driven and often western-oriented social values, norms and rules which are often at odds with the values of Thai and German participants, which has resulted in a fracturing of personal and national identity. Narrative emplotment, where participants from disparate social and economic backgrounds come together to reconfigure the events of their personal and social histories can be a powerful ontological shared practice in which participants can reinterpret their lives in order to reconstitute more cohesive personal identities and therefore create mutually shared organizational and ethical practices. Narrative emplotment can unify the separation of public and private spheres and create a public space in which the taken-for-granted-ness and cultural assumptions of everyday life can be rationally re-assessed, argued and critiqued under the binding inter-related practice of communication.

Chapter Eight of this exploration on ethical decision-making in global corporate contexts provides specific recommendations, policies and actions that Thai and German managers can initiate in order to enact a more collaborative organizational setting in which the co-creation of narrative emplotments and mutually binding ethical actions represent each organizational members' unique socio-cultural experience, while enhancing corporate economic and inter-cultural effectiveness. These policy recommendations are meant to further the research orientation of this exploration, but will be accessible for daily organizational practitioners researchers and educators, who seek concrete guidance in which to initiate change on the practical level.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interpretive research based on the orientation of Critical Hermeneutics places the researcher at the center of the investigative process, thereby eliminating the false pretensions of objectivity and the primacy of methodology over meaningful understanding. The common depiction of research orderliness, linearity, clarity and rationality towards concise conclusions, are shattered in the often messy, haphazard, spontaneous and tacit process of participatory ethnographic exploration. The most difficult aspect of this process has been staying true to the words and expressions of the participants while honoring my point of view. In this vain, I hope that the narrative displays an internal consistency that reveals the truth of the participants, as well as an external consistency that speaks to others as well. I don't pretend to understand the ethical orientations of the participants any better; only my own self-understandings, and how I might pursue a conversation about ethics more authentically, broadly and insightfully.

The challenge of coordinating a research project, traveling to a foreign country, meeting with participants, and then organizing their words into a narrative, has provided the creative interplay between reality and imagination to delve more deeply into the social and cultural experiences that intermingle in global contexts. During this process, I have been able to confront myself, my fears, my past and my future in the process of engagement, participation and conversation with others toward broadening our understandings of ethics in a globally interconnected world, as well as my perspectives of

ethical reasoning within my own local context. In this sense, the study is as much a reflection of my own horizon as it is my shortcomings.

My perspective is that research adds to a growing dialogue about global ethics that places individuals at the center of an enlarged conversation about the role of culture, history and traditions in an increasingly technologically, market-driven capitalist order. This process has also affirmed my belief in the goodness and generosity of world citizens who seek to pursue a meaningful existence within often anonymous roles. My hope is that this document displays the full color and light of a select group of people, who like the rest of us, live lives of quiet desperation. Here are some other things that I learned.

- *Organizations are increasingly Local and Global Contexts*

One of the striking findings of this study is the vast linguistic, spatial, cultural and historical boundaries that participants span and create in international business contexts. No participant was typical of their national characteristics, and many were fiercely atypical of any pre-established cultural assumptions that have been made about groups of people. Although this was an especially select and unique group of individuals, the participants exposed both their culture's stereotypes as well as their fallacies, which made the exploration simultaneously reinforcing and unpredictable. Therefore, when studying international contexts for any period of time, it is wise to have a healthy amount of skepticism about how participants may behave in light of prevailing literature on broad cultural traits and characteristics. Communication, culture and ethics intersect in both local and global contexts as participants continually negotiate their ethical identities in multiple life-worlds, cultures and experiences, and any pursuit of ethics accounts for the

slight and stark variations in customs, language, and meanings that are aligned in the daily actions of individuals who participate in global settings.

- *The Pursuit of Ethics is an Ongoing Critical Assessment of Shared Norms, Values, Attitudes and Beliefs*

The subject of ethics is wide-ranging, abstract and often not the direct subject of social interaction, and yet continually asserts itself in the actions, decisions and perspectives of global participants. Rather than focusing specifically on ethics as a fixed point of agreed-upon conditions of behavior, the pursuit of ethics takes on more nuance, subtlety and meaning when connected to the cultural norms, values, attitudes and beliefs of local and global individuals who act to bind their disparate social experiences into a unified whole of understanding. Ethics cannot conclude in a fixed point of space and time but is the ongoing critical assessment of our prejudices, conclusions and opinions. Especially true of global contexts, ethics is an ever-expanding and contracting universe of meanings that constitutes the expressions of former, current and future global participants in an increasingly heterogeneous social context.

- *An Open Space is Necessary for Legitimate Organizational Ethics*

One stark observation that could be drawn from the data is the lack of basic social interaction that participants experience with members of the other culture to participate in unstructured or formal conversations about ethics. It is remarkable how far executives travel to experience another culture in order to broaden their professional experiences, and yet how habitually they can revert to the social comforts of other like-minded

individuals. Not enough cultural sharing is taking place to foster the trust, understanding and empathy necessary to build ethical relationships. To pursue the rational, critical and relational assessments necessary for legitimate ethical decisions, a shared, non-coercive and unthreatening open space for global participants to interact in dialogue and conversations over a sustained period of time is necessary.

- *More Time, Organizational Contexts and Participants are Necessary to Broaden the Implications of the Study*

There are obvious limitations to this study--including the lack of time, variety of contexts and the number of participants, and the pursuit of broadening our understanding of ethical identity in German-Thai global contexts should have more depth. However, the overall scope of the research population is quite small to begin with, and shouldn't be discounted in light of the depth of meanings discovered. And while many conversations certainly needed development, it is hard to imagine expanding some conversations any further. Strong relationships and parallels exist in the data which could be generalized to broader conclusions, while not lessening the unique contribution that each person made to the topic at hand. What the study lacks in broad research populations and generalizations is compensated for with specific descriptions, particular expressions and unique idiosyncrasies.

- *A Note on Fusion of Horizons*

I have purposely stayed away from Gadamer's concept of Fusion of Horizons throughout this project for fear of appearing pretentious and forceful. Since my first days as a

doctoral student, the image of research concluding in a grand fusion of perspectives between myself and my own most possibilities, where I leave the research process with an enlarged sense of self, has often seemed difficult to describe, and harder to attain. There is no doubt that as a result of this process, I have grown immensely in various emotional and intellectual areas. There were times when I sank to the deepest depths of sadness, alone in bed at night reflecting on the possibility of not completing this task. Other times I have stayed up late at night, attempting to weave theory and dialogue into something provocative, and felt the height of emotional and spiritual awakenings. Perhaps this is what Gadamer meant, as I understand it, a horizon never to be grasped, but that continually propels us toward tomorrow.

Recommendations

Because of the immense physical and psychological influence of science and technology on social dynamics, organizational leaders habitually seek solutions to problems in the form of technological decision-making that too often eliminates the influence of culture, history and traditions in deference to logic, science and linearity as the criteria for innovation and change. Globalization is the manifestation of decades of accumulated scientific and technological practices which have promoted a dominant techno-rational social value system that espouses the yet unrealized promise of global participation and wealth, while unique cultural practices have been forfeited for standardization and the pre-eminence of satisfying the lowest common denominator. While some economists suggest that the general benefits of globalization have lifted global standards of living and reduced global poverty, others suggest the reduction of traditional social practices have fractured social identity, community and historically

connected ways of life. As a result, organizational leaders, especially those of global corporations, focus on methods of problem-solving rather than the meanings those decisions generate for all organizational participants. The data suggests that ethical decisions are too often a-historical, technologically centered, and separated from the socio-cultural context in which organizations are actually conducting business, which creates fractured organizational narratives to members who struggle to identify themselves and a shared sense of meaning.

According Hans-Georg Gadamer (1998: 238), we are freed from the scientific concept of objectivity by accepting our historicity, pre-understandings and prejudices as the beginning of any meaning that we may derive from the interpretation of a text. The hermeneutic task places our understandings within our traditions, while at the same time questioning their influences and biases so as to be more open to the interpretive process and the co-creation of social and organizational worlds (Gadamer 1998: 239). Accepting our historical prejudices validates and affirms the interpretive process because it places us within a context of self, family, religion and state, and thus forms the historical reality of our being. An awareness of one's traditions allows the voices of the text to "present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against our fore-meanings" (Gadamer 1998: 238).

The task of leaders compelled to create ethical organizations is to continually critique their individual and organizational actions and policies in light of outdated prejudices and the emergence of new and vital life perspectives that have emerged in the fields of anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and even business. The following sub-categories will be explored not as definitive recommendations, but as a framework from

which managers, researchers and educators can refer to as the foundation of a self-critique of their practices, or as the initiation of a forum from which to critique the framework itself. This exploration was never meant to conclude in certainties, but add to the body of knowledge on the subject in hopes of broadening our understanding of how ethical decisions are made across global organizations.

The following categories will be briefly explored as both proposals and recommendations in light of the research subject, categories and philosophical orientation of Critical Hermeneutics. These categories include:

- 1) Broadening Dialogue to Integrate the Public and Private Spheres
- 2) Cultivating Interpretive Organizational Contexts
- 3) Coordination of Language and Ethical Decision-Making
- 4) Organizations as the Integration of Individual Narratives
- 5) Justifying Communicative Norms Through Critical Reasoning
- 6) Just Institutions as the Social Embodiment of Ethics

Finally, a brief assessment process for the policies and recommendations will be attached so that those who wish to implement this framework can determine just how its application might appear in organizational life.

Broadening Dialogue to Integrate the Public and Private Spheres

As previously explained globalization has fractured the life-world of individuals and threatens the cohesion of socio-historical contexts while operating beyond the powers of state and national institutions. The private sphere of culture, history and tradition has been severed by a globalized public sphere of techno-rational, a-historical decision-

making that silences the voices of local cultures and traditions. A public space must be re-appropriated within the context of the private sphere in order to honor the particular traits of local culture to more equitably develop global economic activity.

The ordinary use of language is the arbiter of power among people because we all possess the capacity to speak, argue and participate in competing interpretations. The public and private sphere is unified in language and a public space is necessary for the life-world of disparate interests to be expressed. According to Habermas (1996: 360), “The public sphere is not a tightly held organization but a loosely networked system of opinions that function on the elementary basis of language.” Language is an open medium that circulates throughout society and can translate even the most specialized code into meaningful thoughts (Habermas: 1996: 348). Organizations legitimize their actions by allowing a spontaneous non-coercive public space in which competing interpretations of past and future are spoken and listened to.

The space for competing interpretations remains essential for crafting narratives inclusive of the private sphere of interests and the fulfillment of broken promises. Organizational leaders must continually assert their claims to legitimacy as the authors of larger organizational and social narratives in order to justify their actions to create a normatively determined organizational identity. Habermas (1979: 204) recommends that leaders justify their legitimacy through the clarification of historical constructs via competing validity claims, within a system of norms, which reconstructs the past in relation to a historical context that serves the public interest. Reconstructive legitimacy is based on universal validity claims in the event of language that allows for the systematic checking of truth within a loosely orchestrated social and political context.

Thais and Germans can share a common life-world in language, which simultaneously allows them to critique it. Language illustrates commonality and difference and exposes the prejudices of global value systems while providing a new context for meanings. The task of organizational leaders is to allow a public space for people to create their own interpretations in the common exchange of memory, language and testimony, so that individuals can see themselves in one another, and therefore establish a common human narrative.

Cultivating Interpretive Organizational Contexts

Participants with an interpretive orientation to ethical decision-making need not necessarily agree upon their actions, only the process by which decisions are reached; that is, as a mutually binding, non-coercive, rationally argued and linguistically mediated endeavor, that recognizes the universal validity of truth claims as the fundamental basis for ethical choices. Cultivating an interpretive perspective to ethical decisions cannot be achieved in isolation, but becomes a critical aspect of all organizational practices, from top leadership to the supporting staff.

As the data suggests, global corporate contexts are often fractured from the daily life-world of organizational participants and the cultures they inhabit, in favor of an abstract, often a-historical and ultra-scientific combination of norms that are often counter-intuitive to its members. To illustrate how corporate decision-makers are often distant from their immediate environments, one need only be reminded of Markus Volmer, the efficiency expert for Daimler Chrysler, who makes critical decisions about Thai line workers from his spartan office at the top of a Bangkok tower, surrounded by

computer terminals, without any reference to Thai culture. Ethical decision-making in organizations must begin with a deep acknowledgement of cultural contexts, physical and abstract, historical and modern, if they are to engage in ethical choices with any accuracy and integrity. To fail to do so illustrates a lack of concern for those members of the local culture we work with, in addition to the economic and social influences organizations often have on immediate surroundings.

The data also suggests that people are normatively conditioned by their social contexts such as in families, schools, religious settings and social institutions, which play an important role in how individuals see themselves and the world. Habermas (2001: 122) explains,

Whereas theoretical truth presupposes a communicative society of researchers, normative rightness immediately presupposes the sounding board of a social life-world. Norms intervene regularly in the communal life of subjects capable of speech and action. Normative validity means that the rules of action are intersubjectively recognized by the members of a social group.

To disassociate oneself from one's social background is to make choices in a vacuum that may be convenient, but holds little long-term binding power or cultural salience.

Thailand's technology expert General Boonchuay said it convincingly, that Germans possess great craftsmanship, but lack marketing knowledge due to their lack of understanding of Thai culture. Since global corporations permeate so many social contexts, they must represent those same interests in the evidence, rationality and decision-making that goes into ethical choices. To neglect the exterior social context as critical to coherent, meaningful and appropriate ethical decision-making within organizational boundaries is to make choices that will be rarely followed, and even less understood.

An awareness of the norms and values embedded within global contexts can begin with an open critique of the current decision-making process, such as: How are decisions made? What assumptions do we rest decisions on? What influence do our cultural prejudices have on our decision-making? Raising these questions in a non-coercive public forum where individuals carry an orientation toward reaching mutual understanding can allow external practices, customs and local culture to penetrate prevailing organizational boundaries. Habermas (2001: 228) asserts that this means of assimilation on the ethical-cultural level can have a deep and lasting influence on the collective identity of organizational life.

Coordination of Language and Ethical Decision-Making.

Language serves two primary functions in organizational life, 1) as a means of transmitting information and, 2) as the symbolic representation of cultural norms, values, beliefs and traditions. The data suggests that Thai and German organizational participants are mainly interacting on the first level of communication and not on the second. One needs only return to the testimony of Tom, the young Thai computer support person who spoke of his alienation in the workplace and how there is little deep social interaction between Thais and Germans because communication often takes the most elementary of forms. Language has become the arbiter of skills, power, roles and responsibilities, but is not utilized as the basis for sharing the life-world, mutual recognition or meaningful understanding.

Habermas (2001: 127) argues that language “refers to what is commonly recognized as the society’s normative reality, what is mutually recognized as the

manifested subjectivity of a participant, as well as to accepted beliefs about an objectified reality.” The participants in this exploration primarily used English as their method of communication. Although many of the Thais spoke German as well as English and Thai, only one German participant knew Thai as well as English. What allows these Thais to work and participate so effectively with Germans is their proficiency with German language. However, the question always remains—what is lost in translation? And how does the assertion of linguistic power influence behavior, norms and the entire decision-making process?

It is common knowledge that one’s linguistic competence is proportional to one’s social assertiveness and the perception of competence by others in the workplace. The inability to express oneself to the fullest extent and nuance limits the listeners’ depth of understanding. If ethical-decisions are to be attained in the shared recognition of universal validity claims, and language is the representation of cultural norms and traditions, then a greater understanding of what role language plays in including and excluding organizational members’ cultural experiences must be critiqued. If participants coordinate their mutual expectations in a global context in the form of English, then cultural values and the traditions of their native language are neglected.

Therefore, broadening the space for multiple linguistic orientations to co-exist in the form of conversation, play, collaboration and dialogue, will create more binding ethical decisions because they will represent the linguistic diversity of participants and a greater range of cultural backgrounds. The values, norms and experiences carried within multiple language use will enable a more accurate and meaningful representation of the life-worlds that organizational participants inhabit in an increasingly global professional

context. Learning about one another's language, words and structures will reveal the social history that it represents and the social values its speakers bring to a conversation. This process will bring confidence to new organizational members and reduce the fabricated social powers of those who are proficient in only English. If ethical decisions are to be generalizable to all organizational members, then they must be represented by the full spectrum of language use.

Organizations as the Integration of Individual Narratives

Several of the study's participants have alluded to the experience of a fractured personal identity as they simultaneously participate in global business, their local culture as well as the cultures of other organizational members. Public Relations Manager Sirigul Sakornattanagul explained, "People are going to lose their standard of living. They are going to consume more than they can earn. Fast-food, consume, mobile. Thais will lose their identity. It's too much development to go back. Thais don't compromise with products and development. There are some programs coming now that want to go back 100 years—for what?" Those dealing with the personal and social influences of globalization are searching for meaning in a seemingly more alienated and a-historical value system.

Social, political and organizational problems occur when we are stuck in an historical interpretation that fails to imagine itself differently (Kearney 1999: 26.) Narrative identity allows individual stories to constitute a larger life story—a human story, to project a unity of identity and a common humanity. We are dependent upon the identities of others to form our own. In addition, we cannot form our identity without

understanding the socio-cultural history of our origin. Stories allow organizations to transcend the stagnant repetition of memory in order to reconfigure our life histories into a new future.

The potential of organizational leaders to transform collective identities rests in their promise to accurately retell the truth of the past in a manner that allows a sameness of character but also the flexibility of change. The collective reconstitution of a collective memory is not an easy task because organizations generally value efficiency, uniformity and conformity, and often neglect the public space, dialogue and time which is necessary for narratives to take place. Kearney (1999: 27) warns, "Critical caution is called for here. Narrative memory is never innocent. It is an ongoing conflict of interpretations. A battlefield of competing meanings." Especially important in this competition of interpretations should be the voices of the voiceless and the inclusion of the disenfranchised, who tend not to speak for fear of retribution because they remind us of our failed promises.

For example, while participants are aware of the long economic and cultural relationship between Germany and Thailand dating back to the 1860's, few know its specific details, important moments, major characters or social and economic influence. Participants are aware of the present relationship, but not the past and how historical events may have influenced how policies are determined today. A history that is cared for and preserved, but retold through a variety of narrative devices connects the present and past in an exchange of memory and expectations to construct a new narrative that allows the possibility of new meanings to be projected onto the future (Ricoeur: 1990: 14). Organizational leaders can begin by enlarging the sphere of historical archives and

identifying the reflexive instruments of the past such as books, documents, calendars and treaties, which are the ultimate proof of a narrative history. Interpretation of texts and artifacts does not only speak to one generation, but to every generation, and must also be interpreted by succeeding generations. This process becomes an ethical decision, in that what participants choose to include or forget represents either the interpretations of all, or only that of a few.

Remembering the past is the imaginative process of restructuring events into a story that projects a better future; in this sense, fact and fiction are intimately woven. Participants have the responsibility to get the facts straight, but the configuration of a future can take a multitude of vibrant, imaginative forms that reflects new and traditional cultural methods of communication. Stories do not need to be static but continued developing interpretations that alter the changing interpretations of successive generations. In this sense, organizations are stories themselves that have a sameness of character but also a flexibility to evolve (Ricoeur 1999: 27). Allowing multiple voices to participate in the configuration of an organizational narrative is what Kearney (1999: 31) calls an “ethic of memory,” in that history represents the uniqueness of individual communicability possessed by Thais and Germans, rather than an imposed narrative that lacks individual meaning. Crafting meaningful narratives in this way aligns the past, present and future of individuals into a unifying temporal organizational identity that members feel a part of, even if they are relative newcomers.

Justifying Communicative Norms Through Critical Reasoning

Considering social norms in organizational contexts is critical to developing a more open, integrative and inclusive ethical decision-making process because they consist of the taken-for-granted-ness of everyday life but are most difficult to critique because we are often immersed in them. Habermas (2001: 5) explains, “Rules or norms do not happen like events, but hold owing to an intersubjectively recognized meaning. Norms have semantic content: that is, a meaning that becomes the reason or motive for behavior whenever they are observed by a subject to whom things are meaningful.” However, norms are often broken, and their meanings unclear, especially to participants from other cultures.

Contexts determine the acceptability or rejection of normative actions and places language within a system of institutionally regulated behaviors. The data suggests this very point, in that decisions in organizations are often based on technologically mediated logic and lack culturally intuitive procedures. What is most efficient and supported with data and facts supersedes what may be emotive, tacit or culturally particular. However, in order to be considered valid, norms must be understood as meaningful by participants and justified to those whom the norm is addressed. A failure to justify norms over a period of time will lead to habitual actions that lack socially binding meaning, and at its worst, a breakdown in social cohesion.

This is not to suggest that norms should never be broken. On the contrary, violating norms often illuminates the meaning of social behaviors, affirm other related norms and values, or reinforce the norm itself. In addition, as cultures change and develop, it is necessary for new and old members to question norms, which allows us to confirm or reject their continued relevance. However, the danger rests in persistent norms

which carry no meaningful justification for the current social membership, norms which lack meaning, or norms which purposely alienate newcomers. The art of interpretation demands that organizations continually critique the social taken-for-granted-ness in everyday life in order to justify its actions, which often contribute to ethical decisions. In doing so, organizational participants are more conscious of their daily decisions and also more accountable for their actions, because they can articulate and justify their reasons for doing so.

Just Institutions as the Social Embodiment of Ethics

Institutions such as global organizations are the embodiment of our social life-world as they structure our communities beyond individual relations; and yet simultaneously transcend them in the economic, social and political power they assert over regions, nations and cities. Cultivating ethical organizations is of particular importance when considering the pervasiveness of globalization and its dramatic social influences. Harnessing the power of these global institutions should be the aim of individuals, who collectively are responsibility for organizational policies. Ethics is the intersection of the public and private realms, in how organizations act determines the distribution of resources, wealth, roles and power (Ricoeur 1992: 200).

How we treat and consider others who are anonymous participants in our own lives is determined by how institutions create, implement and assess global policies. As the world becomes ever more interconnected in global economic and social practices, there are now fewer reasons to ignore how organizational actions influence cultures, environments and governments. The work of Thais now directly influences Germans in

the products and services they create; as do the activities of Germans on Thai society. Ricoeur (1992: 1995) explains, “The idea of plurality suggests the extension of interhuman relations to all of those who are left outside of the face-to-face encounter of an “I” and a “you” and remain third parties. Including the third party, in turn, must not be limited to the instantaneous aspect of wanting to act together, but must be spread over a span of time.” Ethics in organizations can be considered from the physical position of self in relation to other, as well as the relationship between the imagined self and the imagined other, whose social position, while not readily available to us, nonetheless constitutes the same reality as our own.

Re-appropriating organizations as the synthesis of public and private spheres, self and other, but most importantly, as the distributor of ethical decisions, allows a new interpretation of globalization and organizational life to emerge. “A distributive interpretation of the institution contributes to tearing down this wall and assures the cohesion between the three components—individual, interpersonal, and societal—our concept of the ethical aim” (Ricoeur 1992: 200). Understanding how their work in organizations also influences the social ethics of near and remote people, can initiate active participation in the creation of ethical policies and decisions, as well as bind them more intimately to others, who they may never meet, but who are influenced by their actions.

Assessing the Recommendations

As mentioned throughout the dissertation, this exploration will attempt to avoid generalizations, formulas and guidelines to ethical behavior, but offer a new orientation

to being and acting in global organizational contexts that honors the cultural life-world of its participants and the myriad of perspectives encompassed in organizational life. The effectiveness of an organization's ethical actions can only be assessed by the members of the organization itself, as well as those who benefit and suffer by those same actions, on a daily basis, that reflects on historical traditions in light of continual advancements in philosophy, technology and business, to name but a few. Ethical decision-making is the continual rational debate of actions by and for organizational members, as well as the renewal of past commitments, and is limited only by the participants' capacity to imagine new narrative configurations and possibilities in the co-creative realm of interpersonal dialogue, conversation and creativity.

Organizations are more than coordinated economic activities. They are the modern playing fields where issues of identity, political legitimacy and cultural transformations are negotiated on a daily basis. An orientation toward ethical organizations from the perspective of Critical Hermeneutics encompasses the wider social world in order to be considered viable and legitimate by global citizens inside and out of organizational contexts. These recommendations can have a lasting influence on the ways Thais and Germans conduct business, because of the active commitment of members in the critical assessment of policies that honors the past in light of an unforeseen future, which determines not only the character of their organizations, but the general welfare of both societies. More importantly, it is evident that the influence of globalization reaches beyond organizational boundaries to encompass a wide range of social activities, which has a direct influence on how Thais and Germans perceive themselves and one another. Therefore, the ultimate judgment of any ethical system rests

with forthcoming generations and organizational members who must live with the consequences of our present actions.

Dissertation Summary

This proposal addresses the question of how Thais and Germans co-create ethical decisions in German organizations based in Thailand. The researcher has participated in over 15 selected conversations with Thai and German managers, consultants and small business owners who have significant experience with one another in social contexts. This exploration is important because broadening our understanding of how one's identity and perspective of ethical decisions is negotiated in a multicultural and multilingual business context is critical to understanding the role Thais and Germans play in one another's social, regional and global development, and can inform us in making more culturally appropriate interpretations of one another's behaviors.

Chapter One of this document outlined the lack of research or evidence in the subject area, the background of the research question, and why both educators and practitioners may find the information useful. Chapter Two provided a background of both Germany and Thailand, focusing on social structure, education, parenting and religion. Chapter Three provided a review of literature pertaining to the subject, including the history and challenges of operating a global corporation in Thailand, and the literature explaining the relationship between communication, culture and ethics. Chapter Four summarized the conceptual framework of this study, based on Critical Hermeneutics, where participants co-create the meaning of their own and one another's ethical identities. Chapter Five summarized the study's research protocol and the results of a

pilot study. Chapter Six presented the data collected during the research visit in the summer of 2004 in the form of a narrative. Chapter Six analyzed the data in light of the research orientation. And Chapter Seven proposed recommendations international managers, trading partners and educators can consider when establishing more meaningful relationships between Thais and Germans, as well as what implications the study holds for those interested in the study of ethical decision-making across cultures, or for their own unique dilemmas.

Afterthoughts

This study is the culmination of a personal and social exploration among numerous people who seek to live authentically in relation to others and who wish to cultivate ethical organizations from the perspective of Critical Hermeneutics in light of the prevailing weight of an overly techno-rational, often ethnocentric and impersonal value system. The study was conducted to offer an interpretive perspective as to how members of organizations can conduct business that honors their personal and cultural value systems, while acting to coordinate economic and social activities that are also meaningful, enjoyable and profitable. In an increasingly interconnected global world, acknowledging the importance of interweaving self and other, near and distant, the general and particular when considering daily choices and actions, can create social organizations that operate efficiently and competitively, but are also great places to work, because they carry a depth of understanding that is inclusive of a wide range of life perspectives.

Global organizations are the most compelling genre of modern narratives because of their spatial, temporal and cultural malleability, variety of social actors,

diversity of plots and subplots, and existence of competing interpretations. They are also narratives that must continually respond to local and global crises, while maintaining a continuity of norms, practices and history; thus making them dynamic social stories that individuals simultaneously read and act within. Who gets to legitimately coordinate the activities of these actors, configure the events into a cohesive story, determine its ethical intent and then transmit the narrative to a diverse and contrasting audience, is the greatest challenge facing organizations today, as they struggle to compete in a less predictable, less cohesive and less linear social world.

For those of us attempting to participate effectively in this continually unfolding system of organizational narratives that often clash with our own cultural and personal norms and expectations, negotiating a cohesive personal identity that provides a meaningful life can cause personal strain, intolerance and crisis. A perspective that relies on the interpersonal sharing of one's unique life-situation in relation to the other, is a possible way of preserving our unity of self, while revealing the similarity of our common human dilemma. The act of communication in the form of language, stories and symbols is the most cost effective and socially binding method of interweaving disparate social perspectives and value systems, because of the excess of meaning they allow for a variety of narrative interpretations.

When one realizes that our story is one among many, it frees us from the persistent grasp of selfishness, narcissism and dogmatism, because we rely so deeply on the meaningful understanding of a listener to acknowledge that our story makes sense so that we may continue on with some semblance of a meaningful life. To grasp the essential plot of one another's narrative allows us to understand just how we fit into one

another's stories, which can allow for the creation of a more cohesive and unified social and organizational narrative. The strength of this perspective is its underlying reliance on self critique, which preserves it from being used to coerce, control and impose a narrative on those who willingly reject it. Its weakness is the challenge it places on individuals to listen to others who are different, tolerate ideas that are alien, and feel emotions that are uncomfortable. I am hopeful about its future.

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Attachment A

Letter of Invitation and Research Questions

Date

Participant's Name and Title

Company or Organization

Address

Dear Mr. / Ms.:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an exploration of my dissertation topic on ethical decision-making in German subsidiaries operating in Thailand. As you know, Germany is one of Thailand's largest trading partners, with subsidiaries in manufacturing, banking and tourism. I am inviting German and Thai people who work in one of these subsidiaries to participate in this project to explore ethical issues based on their own experiences in the organization, especially encountering others from another culture. At the completion of the project, I hope to contribute to improving inter-cultural communication between the people of these nations as well as to enlarging our understanding of cross-cultural economic development and its effects on real people.

I am seeking permission to record and transcribe our conversations which will act as the data for my dissertation and for any other subsequent publications. Once transcribed, I will provide a copy of our conversation for you to look over and add or delete any section that you please. My hope is that we have an open and cordial conversation that allows us to explore ethical decisions in between cultures, as well as to explore our own assumptions, values and beliefs. You will need to sign a consent form in order to participate.

Reflecting on your experiences, please consider the following questions:

- Describe your experiences working in a cross-cultural context? How might your experiences differ from a homogeneous cultural environment? How have your experiences been with Germans/ Thais?
- What is your idea of an ethical decision? What values, attitudes, experiences or beliefs guide your ethical system? Is there an ethical system within the organization? How are ethical decisions different in a cross-cultural context?
- What stories are told between people either about themselves, the organization, their jobs or the cultures they come from? Are there ever misunderstandings or miscommunication between people from different cultures? How are those misunderstandings settled?
- How would you describe the inter-cultural climate between people? Are people warm, friendly and open? Or does tension and resentment exist between people?

Thank you for your willingness to meet and have this conversation. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Patrick McDonnell

Researcher, Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
School of Education
Pacific Leadership International

pmcdonnell@hotmail.com

Tel: 415-970-9672

Wk: 415-422-6652

Attachment B: Letter of Confirmation

March 16 2004
Dr. Volker Langbehn
German Department
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94132

Dear Dr. Langbehn,

Thank you for the opportunity to get together with you and have a conversation on April 2nd, 10:30 am, 2004 in HUM 462 on the topic of Ethical Decision-Making in German Transnational Corporations Operating in Thailand in connection with my doctoral research. I am confirming our meeting. Please let me know if something requires you to change our arranged place, time or date.

With your permission, I will record and transcribe our conversation into a text, and then give it to you for review and final approval. I plan to use some quotes, together with other conversations, as part of the analysis. If you wish to change/revise/add/delete anything from it, just let me know. I look forward to working with you on refining the ideas and data collected from our conversation. Your contribution to my dissertation is crucial to the entire project and I deeply appreciate your help.

Thank you and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Patrick McDonnell
Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
School of Education
Pacific Leadership International
pmcdonnell@hotmail.com
Tel: 415-970-9672

Attachment C

Follow Up Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

Dear _____,

I am writing to thank you for the opportunity to get together and have a conversation last (date) at (place) on the topic of Ethical Decision-Making in German Corporations Operating in Thailand in connection with my doctoral research. I am very grateful for the insights you provided me. I realize how busy you are and appreciate the time, attention and energy you were willing to give.

As I mentioned to you, I am providing you the attached copy of our conversation for you to review and approve. I plan to use some quotes, together with other conversations, as part of the analysis. If you wish to change/revise/add/delete anything from it, just let me know. I am enclosing some pictures I took of our meeting and I may use these as well. My timetable is to complete the draft dissertation by the end of November 2004. I will therefore appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible.

Please feel free to call me anytime at my home 415-970-9672 or e-mail me at pmcdonnell@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Patrick McDonnell

Attachment D: Consent to be a Research Participant

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Mr. Patrick McDonnell of the University of San Francisco, School of Education, has asked me to participate in his research which explores ethical decision making in German companies based in Thailand. This research will provide data and recommendations for international managers, academics in the fields of international business or inter-cultural communication and students of cross-cultural communication.

B. PROCEDURES

I agree to be a participant in this study. I am aware voluntary conversations between myself and this researcher will occur. Conversations will be in English, will be approximately one hour in length and will be arranged at my convenience and after these conversations are recorded, they will transcribed. These conversations will be about my experiences in German companies doing business in Thailand or about my relationships with Germans doing Business in Thailand. A copy of the transcribed conversation will be returned to me for review, editing and approval prior to use in the data analysis.

C.RISKS/ DISCOMFORTS

I understand that I am free to decline to answer any questions, ask that the recorder be turned off, or terminate the conversation at any time. If I am uncomfortable I may terminate my participation in the study at any time. I understand that my name and anything I contribute to the text of the research will be included in the study and in potential subsequent publications. I understand that any potential risk due to lack of confidentiality will be mitigated by my editorial control over the data associated with me.

D.BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to me from participation in this study and I will receive no monetary consideration. An indirect benefit is to gain new knowledge of the topic at hand, the phenomenon of ethics in business relationships between two different cultures, and the implications for future international business relationships.

E.ALTERNATIVES

I have freely chosen to participate in this study.

F. COSTS

There will be no cost to me for participating in this study.

G. QUESTIONS

If I have questions or comments about this study, I may contact Mr. Patrick McDonnell at 3774 20th Street Apt. 4, San Francisco, CA 94110 e-mail address pmcdonnel@hotmail.com. Or his advisor Dr. Ellen Herda at the University of San Francisco at 415-422-2075. Should I not want to address either of them, I may contact the Office of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (415) 422-6091 or by writing to the IRBPHS, Psychology Department, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

H. CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I have been given a copy of this consent letter to keep. I understand that my participation in the dissertation research conducted by Patrick McDonnell is voluntary. I fully understand and agree with the above procedures and conditions.

Participant Signature

Date

Patrick McDonnell

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Buddhas and Bratwurst:

Ethical Identity in Global Contexts

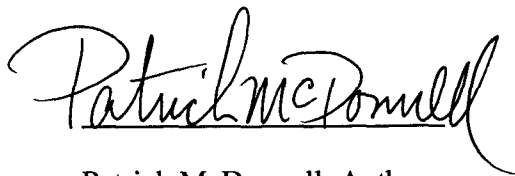
Statement of the Problem: This research addresses the question of how Thais and Germans co-create ethical decisions in German organizations based in Thailand. This exploration is important because broadening our understanding of how one's identity and perspective of ethical decisions is negotiated in a multicultural and multilingual business context is critical to understanding the role Thais and Germans play in one another's social, regional and global development, and can inform us in making more culturally appropriate interpretations in global contexts.

Procedures and Methods: Research based on the Critical Hermeneutic approach to ethical decision-making seeks to understand how participants in global organizational contexts co-create ethical decisions based on the interplay of one another's communicative norms and cultural assumptions. Critical Hermeneutics places the researcher at the center of a social exploration to enlarge his understanding of how ethical identities are formed in global contexts with at least two cultures, in the act of language, conversation and the co-creation of meaning. The three main themes which act as the conceptual framework for the analysis include: Discourse Ethics, Storytelling and Narrative Identity.

Results: Global institutions have fractured the life-worlds of individuals and threatens the cohesion of socio-historical contexts while operating beyond the powers of state and national institutions. The private sphere of culture, history and tradition has been severed

by a globalized public sphere of techno-rational, a-historical decision-making that silences the voices of local cultures and traditions. A public space must be re-appropriated within the context of the private sphere in order to honor the particular traits of local culture to more equitably develop global economic activity.

Conclusions: Ethical decision-making in organizations must begin with a deep acknowledgement of cultural contexts, physical and abstract, historical and modern, if they are to engage in ethical choices with any accuracy and integrity. To fail to do so illustrates a lack of concern for those members of the local culture we work with, in addition to the economic and social influences organizations often have on local surroundings.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick McDonnell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Patrick McDonnell, Author

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellen Herda". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr. Ellen Herda

Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Patrick McDonnell

Candidate

April, 19, 2005

Date

Dissertation Committee

John O'Keefe

Chairperson

April 19, 2005

John R. Devine

April 19, 2005

Alma Flw Adz

April 19, 2005